

RICE UNIVERSITY

**Covenant Law in the Transformation of the Culture of Violence and Revenge:
An Interpretation of 2 Kgs 14: 5-6 in the Context of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide**

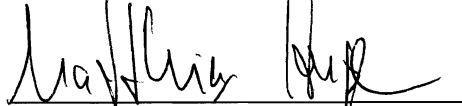
by

Wasswa Israel Ahimbisibwe

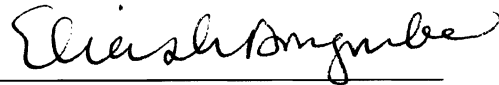
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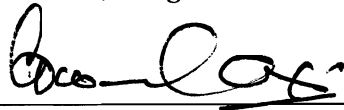
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ABSTRACT

Covenant Law in the Transformation of the Culture of Violence and Revenge: An Interpretation of 2 Kgs 14: 5-6 in the Context of the 1994 Rwanda Genocide

by

Wasswa Israel Ahimbisibwe

If a Hebrew Biblical text could motivate eighth century B.C.E Israelite society to move away from the horrendous practice of violence and blood revenge, isn't it possible that the same text can motivate a twenty first century society to move away from the crisis of revenge and genocide, especially since the religious beliefs of the latter society are derived from the basic concepts of that particular text? The chief objective of this study is to analyze a Hebrew Biblical text, that is 2 Kgs 14: 5-6 and its basic tenets that are enshrined in covenant law that will prevent future mass atrocity. I support the view that religious insights that encourage the welfare of people should be embraced not because they are an authoritarian imposition from above, but because they are able to develop a coherent correlation between experience and morals, especially public morals, the relationship between a person and his neighbor.

Argued from a context of genocide, the study lays in detail how covenant law is revolutionary in the innovation of justice thereby transforming societies from the impulse of vengeance and violence. In essence, it is a study that combines biblical studies (rooted in biblical theology) and African studies and how it contributes to solving a pressing contemporary problem.

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CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Introduction.....	iv
Chapter One: Covenant Law and the Concept of Transformation.....	1
Chapter Two: The Custom of Blood Vengeance in Israel and her ancient Near Eastern neighbors.....	28
Jeremiah's Eschatological Appropriation of king Amaziah's action in 2 Kgs 14: 5-6.....	47
Ezekiel's Appropriation of Amaziah's action in 2 Kgs 14: 5-6.....	52
Chapter Three: The Causes of Genocide in Rwanda.....	58
Background to the Hamitic Hypothesis.....	60
The Church and the Racialization of the Education System.....	86
Chapter Four: The Role and Contribution of Gacaca in Transforming the Culture of Genocide.....	112
Chapter Five: The Interpretation and Application of 2 Kgs 14:5-6 in Rwanda.....	154
Bibliography:.....	174

INTRODUCTION

It was on April 6, 1994 at 8:30 pm when the plane carrying the President of Rwanda, Major General Juvénal Habyarimana and the President of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira was brought down with a missile when attempting to land at Gregory Kayibanda International Airport in Kigali, Rwanda. The plane crashed killing the two and within two days, the Prime Minister of Rwanda, Mrs. Agathe Uwiringiyimana, several members of her cabinet, human rights activists, businessmen, lawyers, professors, medical doctors, teachers, priests and many people of Tutsi background were mercilessly killed. Several hundreds who took refuge in public buildings such as churches, schools, and hospitals were all massacred and by the end of 1994, close to one million people had been massacred in the latest human tragedy to befall Rwanda.

The objective of Covenant Law in the transformation of the culture of violence and revenge is to underscore the notion that the covenant mediated by Moses between YHWH and Israel on Mount Sinai was transformative, that is, it transformed the prevailing custom of blood revenge in ancient Israel. The rhetorical force of the prohibiting command in the base text 2 Kgs 14:5-6: "Fathers shall not be put to death...children shall not be put to death" as spoken and commanded by YHWH implies that fathers or children shall not be murdered. The commandments contained the will of YHWH and were the absolute law. Israel having entered the covenant in an exclusive relationship meant that she would accept the enshrined will of YHWH which, would be transposed unto her such that her ways of living are

the ways according to YHWH especially if Israel must not turn right or left from following the covenant Cf. Deut 5:32-33.

The study recognizes that by extension YHWH's covenant with Israel was opened to all mankind throughout Christianity without requiring the altering of ethnic or national status. It means then that the transformative nature of the Sinai covenant is an important entry point for Hebrew Bible ethics throughout the Judeo-Christian tradition. The tradition presupposes that those who adopt and adapt Hebrew Scriptures must not allow to lapse the substance of the Sinai affirmation: "Everything the Lord has said we will do." Moses then wrote down everything the Lord had said Exod 24: 3-4. So it becomes a matter of whether to obey God or stray from Him or whether to do and obey the commandments or let them lapse. It is in this regard that the base text of the study, that is 2 Kgs 14:5-6 is analyzed in the context of the 1994 Rwanda genocide with the hope that the concept of Covenant Law and Its Transformative Nature will help the Rwandan Church to recapture the original context without undermining Rwanda's identity while transforming the society from the vicious cycle of violence starting from 1959 through the genocide of 1994.

I recognize that the 1994 Rwanda genocide has generated a substantial amount of research interest among the best world scholars. But none of them has based his or her work on a purely Hebrew Biblical text as I have done. This position has undoubtedly made me to make a selective bibliography that I have supported with my own fieldwork in Rwanda involving observations and interviews. I have also recognized that the people of Rwanda have become determined in resolving

conflict using the Gacaca justice system as a cultural ethos. While the Gacaca is a big and important study of its own my study has recognized that it is a cultural platform unto which the Bible can reinforce its message of peace and transformation. Perhaps there might be a suggestion that the Gacaca form of justice is more important than what the Hebrew Bible offers but I argue that Gacaca has better meaning in light of the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter one begins with an examination of covenant law and the concept of transformation in ancient Israel. The chapter underscores the fact that in order for Israel to change from what she was into what YHWH wanted her to become, she was commanded to love the Lord her God with all heart and soul and with all strength. Since this obligation demanded for a practical response from the entire being of Israel, the obligation advocated for a transformed way of living. The chapter demonstrates with key Biblical personalities who are described as having walked in the ways of YHWH and ends by making a connection with the gentile world to which the covenant of Israel was opened (see Gal 3:29). To this effect, the transformative nature of the covenant was extended to the gentiles. That said, why then was the Church in Rwanda not only reflecting tensions of the society but also increasing and fostering those tensions?

Chapter two discusses how the Sinai covenant enshrined in 2 Kgs 14:5-6 transformed the custom of transgenerational revenge. By drawing from the ancient Near Eastern practices of blood vengeance, king Amaziah breaks this pattern and sets Israelite society and her religion quite distinct from those of her ancient Near Eastern neighbors. The uniqueness of this stance and its the implications for the

extended family into the covenant, the church of Rwanda also makes Christianity a very unique religion. The third chapter transitions to the causes of Genocide in Rwanda. Like Israelite ancient Near Eastern neighbors who never broke away from the practices of blood vengeance, it appears that a church that perpetuates conflict and revenge leading to genocide needs to re-examine her loyalties and judge whether loyalty should belong to God or to secular powers.

Chapter four recognizes the importance of the Gacaca as a cultural ethos for reinforcing the voice and message of the Bible in building peace, reconciliation and transformation. In a search for building and sustaining peace, Gacaca provides the opportunity for healing and rehabilitation. Its efforts are like pillars to augment and reinforce the biblical message of peace and reconciliation. I have recommended its *modus operandi* but I have also suggested that while its methods are unique in convicting the perpetrators of genocide, the absolution can be reserved for the church.

Chapter five concludes by linking the base text, that is, 2 Kgs 14:5-6 with Rwanda. Its main objective is to create an encounter between the biblical text and the Rwandan context. My method is to use the Western/European pattern of linking the text with the genocide situation and making the text to speak to those circumstances. I have assumed that if covenant law could transform ancient Israel from the horrendous practice of blood vengeance, there is no way it must work for Israel and cannot work for Rwanda, an extended member of the covenant.

Chapter One

Covenant Law and the Concept of Transformation

This chapter discusses the notion that the Sinai covenant had as its chief objective the transformation of ancient Israelite ways or pagan customs into the practice of The Nature of God Alone. The covenant comprised various laws intended for various situations but in each of these, Israel, through Moses was commanded to ‘carefully observe them with all heart’ (Deut 26:16), literally, Israel was “to do these laws”, in order to make known its covenant relationship to God by the quality of life it displayed. The covenant was to change what Israel was into what God wanted her to become. The key to understanding what was meant by doing God’s law is the statement: You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might, (Deut 6:5). Since this obligation demanded a practical response from the entire being of Israel, the obligation advocated a transformed way of living. Moreover, Moses occasionally employed the expression: The Way of Yahweh or rather walking in His ways (hlk bdrkyw), when he implored Israel to keep the commandments of God (Deut 5:30-33; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16). Similarly, ways, statutes, commandments and ordinances are regularly used as synonyms for the Law (Deut 11:1; Ps 19:8-10. Clearly this phraseology implies that Israel, prior to the Sinai covenant was walking a different walk. It would require

the Sinai covenant to transform this 'other walk' or 'way' into the ways of Yahweh Alone.¹

In essence, the Sinaitic covenant spells out the type of nation that God intended Israel to be. It is clear from the demands imposed on Israel that being in a special relationship with God involves more of a responsibility than a privilege. Israel, the patriarch's promised descendants, could enjoy the divine human relationship anticipated in Gen 17:7-8 only by maintaining an ethical distinctiveness enshrined in God's instructions to Abraham: "Walk before me and be blameless," (Gen 17:1). Just like their ancestor Abraham, Israel must "keep the way of Yahweh by doing what is right and just" (Gen 18:19). Israel must "obey Yahweh's voice and keep his requirements, commandments, statutes, and laws" (Gen 26:5; cf. Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7). Having Yahweh as their God would involve keeping in conformity with his holy character, (cf. "You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy," Lev 19:2)."² Moses therefore knew that an everyday habit of walking in God's ways would develop a right attitude to a daily but changed life. This is transformation, an important prerequisite for shalom in the land to be inhabited. It turns out then that Moses' teaching had observance of the laws as its central message but with the ultimate purpose of changing lives and changing them for God, the originator of the laws. The "teachings" or "instructions" dealt with Israel's origin and the reason for

1. The Hebrew Bible demonstrates that prior to the Sinaitic Covenant, only Enoch (Gen 5:22) and Noah (Gen 6:9) 'walked' with God and became *blameless*. Abram was only required (Gen 17:1) and later evidence indicate clearly that he complied.

2. Williamson, Paul R, "Covenant", *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*. (Edited by Alexander, Desmond T & David W. Baker; Intersity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, Leicester, England, 2002), 150.

her being with her future, and the fulfillment of her existence with her attitude and motivations for transformed behavioral action.

Behind this objective of transformation, Moses aimed at deepening the conscience of his listeners. No doubt then that he underscored the significance of the heart. Accordingly, the law of the covenant was to be on Israel's heart (Deut 4:39; 6:6; 11:18; 30:14; 32:46). The Hebrew, "heart" (*lev* or *levav*) usually refers to the interior of the body, conceived of as the seat of thought, intention, and feeling, and "soul" (*nefesh*) refers to the seat of emotions, passions and desires.³ Since the other meaning of *nefesh* is life, it is also possible that the commandment: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might, (Deut 6:5), requires behavioral change and action beyond and above the emotion. Else where, "Heart" connotes mind, and indeed the Septuagint (LXX) has *dianoia* 'mind' instead of *kardia* 'heart'. God's "heart and soul" refers to his wishes and purposes according to 1 Sam 2:35. To do something with all heart and soul means to do it with the totality of one's thoughts, feelings, intentions and desires. It appears then that this phraseology is employed to describe how Israel must love God, serve him, observe his commandments and return to him.

Although love between God and Israel involves also affection and emotion, the practical meaning of the commandment of love is loyalty and obedience as we see in 6:6, "These words which I command you this day shall be put on your heart," and from other passages in which love is paired with reverence, obedience, and service, such as, "to fear...to love him... to serve...to observe God's commandment,"

³. Tigay, Jeffrey H, *Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the new JPS Translation*: (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), p.77.

(10:12; cf. 11:13; 30:16, 20.) Second, the way love is described here (“with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might corresponds to the way loyalty is depicted in the vassal treaties. The commands of love in these treaties are accompanied by demands of exclusive devotion as in Deut 6:5. Love with all the heart and with all the soul is similar to the suzerain’s demand of the vassal to come to his aid with all force, that is to say, with his army and chariots. Thus we read in a Hittite vassal treaty: “If you do not come to aid with full heart... with your army and your chariots and will not be prepared to die,⁴ cf. “If you do not fight for the crown prince Ashurbanipal, son of your lord Esarhaddon...if you do not die for him” (The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon, par.229). Indeed, Deut 6:5 contains all the elements found in the treaties namely devotion with all the heart, with all the soul or readiness to give one’s life, and provision of might and force when necessary.

Deuteronomy also promises the following: “But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him with all your heart and with all your soul...he is merciful and will not abandon you” (Deut 4: 29-31); “ And now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but the reverence of the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve... with all your heart and with all your soul” (10:12); “The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul” (26:16); “ ... and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul...then the Lord will restore your fortunes” (30:2); “...if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in

⁴. Weinfeld, Moshe, *Deuteronomy* 1-11, AB Vol.5. (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 351.

this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all heart and with all soul” (30:10). These exhortations put emphasis on “all” and biblical scholars have suggested that the emphasis is an obligation to serve the Lord alone without dividing one’s loyalty between God and other lords.⁵ Since HYWH alone is Israel’s God, Israel must love and serve Him with a single-minded devotion that is coupled with behavioral action.

That God tests the heart, Deut 8:2 (cf.13: 3), and (Jer 11:20; (cf.20: 12); 17:10), gives a great insight in the mind of God concerning whether or not his laws will be observed. Moshe Weinfeld has suggested that the idea of God testing the heart is dependent on the manna episode in Exod 16:4, where the Lord informed Moses that bread will rain from heaven and that it will be a test of obedience for the Israelites.⁶ It turned out that Israel failed the test, making the manna function as test for Israel’s disposition regarding God and as test for God’s instructions. God tests the heart and it is precisely the reason why false prophets do not have God’s word on their hearts and that they are false messengers. Instead, they have “lies” in their hearts; they “prophesy the deceit of their own hearts” (Jer 23; 26); they speak visions of their own hearts (RSV “minds”; Jer 23:16; 14:14). God has neither sent them nor spoken to them (Jer 23:21, 32), that is, he has not put his word on their hearts. Like the false prophet of Deuteronomy 13:1ff; they tell dreams which make

⁵. Cf. Bright, John, A *History of Israel*. (2nd Edition, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), pp.134-135. This is also the view of Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, AB Vol.5. (New York: Doubleday, 1964) p. 351. Jeffrey H. Tigay in also supports it in: *Deuteronomy 1-11*, vol.5. (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 351.

⁶. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*. AB vol.5. (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 388.

the people go after other gods (Jer 23:27f.). Their hearts are not transformed in order to live for God.

Further, Moses, in his final speeches to Israel recorded on the Second Pair of Tablets (Deut. Chapter 10), continues to underscore the notion of transformation. While emphasizing the essence of the Law, he employs the expression: Cut away... the thickening of your heart, literally, "circumcise the foreskin of your heart," (Deut 10:16). Circumcision was originally carried out either at birth or in puberty to indicate membership in society. The imagery is drawn from an exclusively male experience but the Deuteronomic author has interpreted circumcision in a figurative manner: not circumcision of flesh but circumcision of heart, in other words of spirit and soul. Elsewhere in Deuteronomy 30:6, God is the one who will circumcise the people's hearts after the restoration. The same notion appears in Jer 4:4, where the people are asked to "be circumcised to Yahweh and to remove the foreskin of their hearts" (hmlw lYHWH whsrw yrlwt lbbkm). Deuteronomy 10:16 is also reflected in the Manual of Discipline of the Qumran sect: "to circumcise in the community the foreskin of the mind and the stiff neck", (IQS 5:5), except that here the heart is changed to mind. "Foreskin" or "cover" is a metaphor to referring to a mental block that would make Israel stubborn. It blocks Israel's heart and renders it inaccessible to God's Law. The use might have been prompted by reference in Deut 10:15 in reference to the patriarchs, especially the election of Abraham which was sealed by the covenantal sign of circumcision (Gen 17:10-14,23-27; 21:4).⁷

⁷. Tigay, Jeffrey H, *Deuteronomy* 1-11, 107-108.

It becomes increasingly clear, as here that the linkage between law and the circumcision of the heart is an approach to indicate a commitment to God and to serve as a sign of personal obedience to the commandments.⁸ A uncircumcised heart, like an uncircumcised ear (Jer 6:10) and uncircumcised lips (Exod 6:12,30), means an organ that is incapable of absorbing feelings and impressions from the outside; compare the fattened heart in Isa 6:10 (cf. Ps 119:70), and there also sealed eyes and heavy ears.⁹ A call to circumcision was therefore a call to spiritual transformation for circumcision of the heart would transform the stubborn tendencies that made Israel want to stick to ungodly or pagan practices. After circumcision each person would implicitly know God, that is, recognize him as Lord and not simply pay him the token of lip service. In other words, transformation would be the result of the total human response to the Sinaitic covenant law, characterized with a changed positive attitude and behavioral actions. It would be a means to condition the entire range of human experience by the awareness of God's will (as revealed in the Sinaitic laws) and in response to his demands.¹⁰

Circumcision or commitment is a duty that is inseparable from action; it is regularly connected with the observance of God's commandments. It involves love and reverence "fear" as desirable attitudes that should motivate people to obey

⁸. JPS, TANAKH has translated *mul* (Deut 10:16) as cut away while RSV renders it as *circumcise*. The RSV's rendering of Jeremiah adds to it a better sense: "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, remove the foreskins of your hearts", (Jer 4:4). This is a call to a spiritual change of the heart and not a call for putting on a physical mark.

⁹. Weinfeld, Moshe, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, vol.5, 437

¹⁰. Nahum, M. Sarna, *Genesis*. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1989), 123.

God's laws. Both attitudes have the same practical effect, and Deuteronomy does not draw a distinction between them; they appear side by side in such passages as Deut 10:12 and Deut 13:4-5.¹¹ Other prophets¹² said that God would ultimately "program" Israel to be loyal and obedient to Him, so that they would obey Him instinctively and never again experience exile. Moses stopped short of saying that: the removal of the "foreskin" implies only that God would remove impediments that hinder Israel from voluntary following God's teachings.

Broadly speaking, covenant laws may be put into three categories. The first is the casuistic, describing a case deriving from a person and his neighbor in society and prescribes a punishment that can reasonably be administered by a human court, for instance, Exod 21: 18-19. The second is apodictic, an absolute norm, phrased in the second person, does not prescribe the penalty but if it does, the penalty cannot be administered by humans, but the effect of the crime is vividly social in nature. For instance, the injunction not to wrong or oppress a resident alien, (Exod 22:21). The third category includes those norms expressed as imperatives whose violation would seem to have no immediate danger to society. Examples here include the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Israel was able to absorb all these covenant laws into her theology and derive from them the principle of the practice of the imitation of God. The people understood that their everyday life affairs, their secular interaction with one another in their communal life up and down the country were dependant on these laws. No doubt they began as a further expression of the penetrating quality of that will for justice,

¹¹. Tigay, Jeffrey H, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, vol.5, 77.

¹². See *Jeremiah* 30:31-34; also see *Ezekiel* 36:26.

which striped people of any excuse of not having understood. But there is something more important here namely that Yahweh wants obedience, admittedly; but he also wants people who understand his commandments and ordinances, that is, people who want to assent inwardly as well. The obedience that God wants is the obedience of grown up people. Thus Deuteronomy, which draws from covenant while presenting itself as one makes a more earnest endeavor to explain the commandments of God by preaching, has the right to say, “very near to thee is the word, in thy mouth and in thy heart for you to observe” (Deut 30:14).

The Sinaitic covenant served as a controlling metaphor for Israel’s relationship to God through most of biblical history. It seems therefore that it is difficult to comprehend the literary legacy of ancient Israel without understanding her relationship to covenant. One of the outstanding features of the covenant is the apodictic nature of its stipulations- the simple, absolute, positive and negative imperatives that are devoid of qualifications and mostly presented without penalties or threats of punishments. The idea is that the covenant is a self-enforcing document. The motivation for fulfilling its stipulations does not come from the fear of retribution but rather from the heart’s desire to conform to the divine will, reinforced by the spiritual discipline and moral fiber of the individual¹³. Even those commandments that seemed to make obedience conditional, and dependent upon Israel’s achievement, are prefaced by a declaration of God’s election and his love. Gerhard Von Rad calls them “comfortable words” to Israel bidding her now for her

¹³. Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, 1st Edition. The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 103.

part receive a reality already granted to her, and completely granted to her, and completely to take her place within it obedience and gratitude.¹⁴

The Wisdom Psalms, particularly Pss 1 and 119, play variations upon the theme of transformation which Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist keep mentioning namely that men are to keep these laws in their hearts and they are to be present to them in every situation of life (Deut 6:6ff.; Josh 1:8). Two expressions keep recurring in these psalms, that is, the will of God as revealed in the law is the subject of constant meditation and endless joy. Man is to be unremittingly occupied with it in the sphere of emotional life and mental capacities. Consequently, there comes in view the picture of the character that is transformed. It is that person whose spiritual life is totally filled by God's addressing him and who for his action too derives every power from the word of God: "for where a man so lays himself open to 'the Torah' all will be well"¹⁵. It appears then that there is a deliberate appeal for the inner disposition, in fact the heart, to put the commandments of God at a very close relationship. It is in the heart and in the understanding that Israel's belonging to God comes about.

The formula of "with all heart and with all soul and with all strength" in Deut 6:5 is a key element in underscoring the transformative role of the covenant particularly on how it transformed king Josiah of Judah, (640-09 B.C). There is no doubt that the Deuteronomistic historiographer in 2 Kings 23:25 described him as

¹⁴. Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol.2. The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), 230. See also Jon D. Levenson: "The Theology of the Historical Prologue," *Sinai and Zion, An Entry into the Jewish Bible*. (New York: Winston Press, 1985), 36-42.

¹⁵. Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol.2*, 200.

one who turned to God in a way unmatched by any other Israelite king. He is credited for the reform in 2 Kings 22: 1-23:30, for centralizing worship and establishing the book of Yahweh's Law as the basis of national life. According to the book of 2 Kings, the Deuteronomistic historiographer makes an impression that the king's actions were set in motion by the 'discovered law book', something that can be referred to as "the king's reaction to the discovery." However, the story of this great reform contains two distinct elements namely those actions taken against idolatry and against the cult of high places, and those actions involving the swearing of the covenant including the centralization of the paschal sacrifice in Jerusalem. Actions involving the liquidation of cult objects were undertaken without connection to the book of Law. Moreover, the book of 2 Chronicles 34-35 presents a different order of events, one in which the book of Law does not play a central role as in 2 Kings 22¹⁶. The latter actions involving the making of the covenant and the celebration of the Passover were performed in accordance with what is written in the book of Deuteronomy, (2 Kings 23:21-25.), cf. 2 Chronicles 34:35. There is no reference whatsoever to the recovered law book on the actions taken against idolatry. Although modern scholars have suggested that movements against paganism or "idolatry" have precedents in ancient Israel,¹⁷ I would like to attribute

¹⁶. Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion, An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, (New York: Winston Press, 1985), 36-42.

¹⁷. Moshe Weinfeld has suggested that the author to the book of Kings left out details in the narratives with an intention of creating an impression that the book of Law stood behind the important enterprise of the reform by dovetailing the section on the discovery of the book with the account of purification of the cult and its centralization. He did this in order to create an association of ideas between the discovery of the book and the facts of the reform. In contrast to this, he further suggests that the author of Chronicles chronologically arranged material to indicate

the radical and extreme stance with which Josiah eradicated alien cults to how he personally believed in the covenant and how he allowed its authority to transform not only his religious consciousness but also his actions.

My point is not to deny the significance of the recovered law book in the reform process. In fact, Josiah took many of the steps recorded of him at the scroll's behest. This was certainly true of his centralization of the cult in Jerusalem and his attempt to integrate the rural priests with that of the Temple, for these are measures specifically called for only by Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut 12:13f; 17f; 18:6-8). Nevertheless, the book was discovered after the eradication of alien cults from the land and during the course of renovations of the Temple. In fact it was discovered after the removal of idolatrous objects that had been introduced into the Temple by Manasseh. The book of Chronicles report the fact that extensive repairs were being made to the Temple because earlier kings had allowed the structure to deteriorate: "They put it out to the artisans and the masons to buy quarried stone and wood for the coupling and for the roof beams which the Kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin" (Chr 34:11). Further reading Chr 34-35 presents a different order of events, one in which the book of Law does not play a central role as in 2 Kings 22. It seems reasonable, therefore, to say that the "wheel" of reform was already in motion and the recovered law book would give the reform a different "speed" namely the momentum and justification with which Josiah involved the people in the making of

that Josiah had the task of eradicating abomination not only in Jerusalem and Judah, but also in the whole territory of the Israelites, (See Weinfeld, in *Deuteronomy 1-11*, Vol.5. page 72.Cf. Yehezkel Kaufmann's view that the purge was gradual more along the lines of the narrative in Chronicles in his Book: *"The Religion of Israel From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile."* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 287.

the covenant and the celebration of the pessah. In order to understand Josiah's transformation however, I think it is important to recapture vital historical developments and link them to his personal life.

The period between 740 B.C.E and 640 B.C.E is a period when the Assyrian empire dominated Syria and Palestine. The empire fostered international trade and diplomatic travel, settled new populations nearby Israel and drafted Israelite units into its army. The culture of the empire was an amalgam of Assyrian, Aramaic, and Phoenician elements and its impact on Israel became evident in art and architecture.

The leading assimilators were the royal court and the commercial elite. They adopted foreign rites, including many of those that Deuteronomy forbids. King Ahaz, for instance "passed his children through fire", (II Kings 16:3), like a Canaanite and replaced the Temple alter with a new one copied from an alter he saw in Damascus, (II Kings 16:10-18). Although this religious assimilation was temporary curbed by king Hezekiah under a nationalistic fervor¹⁸, his son Massaseh resumed it with greater magnitude. Manasseh rebuilt the shrines (bamot) that Hezekiah destroyed, built alters (mizbehot) to Baal, worshiped the host of heaven and placed alters to it and an idol of the goddess Asherah in the Temple of the Lord, passed his son through fire, and practiced divination and necromancy, (II Kings 21:2-7). Other kings of Judah placed horses and chariots for the sun in the Temple, (II Kings 23:11). In Jerusalem, courtiers and members of the royal family could be seen "donning a foreign vestment... and skipping over the threshold," obviously a Philistine religious custom, (Zeph 1:9; cf. I Sam 5:5). A cult of the "Queen of Heaven," a favorite of

¹⁸. See Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 286-290.

women was also in place, (Jer 7:18ff; 44:15-25). Others in Judah went to the extent of dismissing the God of Israel as irrelevant, doing nothing good or bad, (Zeph 1:12).

Just about this time, the prophetic messages of two contemporaries namely Zephaniah (640-09 B.C) and the younger Jeremiah (627-26 B.C) asserted that the nation was under judgment and would know the wrath of God if she did not repent. Zephaniah, who may have belonged to a royal family (Zeph 1:1), in a true sense carried forward the tradition of Isaiah namely his understanding of sin, his conception of the Day of Yahweh (yōm 'ādhōnāy) and of a purified remnant.¹⁹ As in Amos, the day of Yahweh is both a festival day and a day of judgment. The festival connotation is indicated in Zeph1: 7: “the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests”. This was a happy moment when the people would hold parties in connection with their sacrifices. But like Amos, Zephaniah sees it as a day of retribution because of two charges. First, there is idolatry where people, even priests worship Baal, bow down to the host of heaven and swear by Milkom-the god of Ammon, as well as Yahweh. The second charge is distinctive: “I will punish the officials and the king’s sons and all who dress themselves in foreign attire,” (Zeph 1:9). Probably, Josiah did not have sons at this early age and so the reference to sons could not be directed at him. But even then, it was an issue concerning him and all those like him with royal heritage. Zephaniah denounced all the sins both cultic and ethical that Manasseh’s policy had allowed flourishing as a prideful rebellion against Yahweh that had provoked his wrath, (Zeph 1:4-6, 8f; 12; 3:1-4, 11). Announcing that the awful Day of the Lord was imminent (1:2f, 7, 14-18), he declared that the

¹⁹. Elliger, K, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten, II* (Alte Testament deutsch, 3rd ed., Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Reprecht, 1956-59), 79f.

nation had no hope except in repentance (2:1-3), for which Yahweh had offered one last chance (3:6f). Just like Isaiah, Zephaniah had a view that Yahweh would bring out of the judgment a chastened and purified remnant (3:9-13).

Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry in thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, which would be 627/26 B.C (Jer 1:1). Thus the call of the prophet would precede by five years of finding the scroll of Deuteronomy (2 Kings 22-23). Some modern scholars take issue with the date he started his ministry but I take it at face value since there is nothing that argues against Jeremiah having proclaimed words of judgment in the period from 627-622 B.C. He certainly did not preach from the recovered Law Book of the Temple (believed to be the basis for Deuteronomy) but this is how his own biography is key in accounting for the similarity between his theology in Jer 1:4-10 and that of Deuteronomy. He was the son Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, (Jer 1:1). Hilkiah is not identical with the high priest by the same name, who found the scroll of Deuteronomy in the temple (2 Kings 22:8). However, another account in Joshua 21:17-19 says that Anathoth located three and one half miles North East of Jerusalem (modern Ras el-Kharrubeh), was one of the Levitical cities set apart for priests in the tribe of Benjamin. Elsewhere in 1 Kings 2:26f, recounts how Abiathar, Eli's descendant and a priest during the time of David got banished to Anathoth for his opposition to Solomon. This connection makes it possible for Jeremiah to be a direct descendant of Abiathar and though not a priest himself, his roots go back to

Eli and the ancient amphictyonic center at Shiloh (cf. Jer 7:12, 14). In short, he is heir to the sacral covenant traditions of the Israelite amphictyony.²⁰

Foremost, scholars who date the beginning of Jeremiah's prophetic activity sometime after 622/21 B.C have always assumed that he was dependent on the literally entity of the of Deuteronomy for his understanding of himself as the prophet like Moses. Instead, the traditions of Deuteronomy on which he depended were kept alive among the heirs of the reform movement that formulated them in the first place, and those traditions were preserved in the territory of Benjamin.²¹ Secondary, Jeremiah in a vision participated with God in making the covenant in which God commanded Jeremiah to go and listen with the people to the words of Josiah's covenant. He would disclose to them that God himself was present and cursed its violators in the hearing of the prophet. Jeremiah answers, "Amen", (Jer 11:1-5). God had therefore performed the ancient rite of adjuration according to Deuteronomy 27:1.²² Therefore, as John Collins has noted, the Deuteronomistic language of Jeremiah is not because he depended on the recovered scroll of the Temple but it is probably an interpretation of his oracles by Deuteronomistic editors who viewed his words through the lens of their own theology and made him sound more Deuteronomistic than he had actually been.²³

²⁰. Achtemeier, Elizabeth, *Deuteronomy, Jeremiah*. Foster R. McCurley Edition, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 55-56.

²¹. Achtemeier, *Deuteronomy, Jeremiah*, 55-56.

²². Kaufmann, Yehezkel, *The Religion of Israel From Its beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, 420.

²³. Collins, John J, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 337-338.

It seems Jeremiah's biographic posture together with his call positioned him to preach in yet an older tradition reaching back through Hosea to the Sinai Covenant. He brutally attacked the idolatry that had filled the land, declaring it an inexcusable sin against the grace of Yahweh who had brought Israel up from Egypt and made her his people (Jer 2:5-13). He lent himself both language and substance from Hosea especially by likening Judah to an adulterous wife who will surely be divorced if she does not repent (3:1-5, 19-25; 4:1f). While pleading with Judah, he also hoped for the restoration of the entire Israel to the family of Yahweh (3:12-14; 31:2-6, 15-22).²⁴

Judah's sin is written with a "pen of iron; with a point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart" (Jer 17:1)- that is the major indictment of Yahweh against his people according to Jeremiah. If in fact Deuteronomy advocated for its words of covenant Law to be on Israel's heart (Deut 4:39; 6:6; 11:18; 30:14; 32:46), then the meaning of Jer 17:1-4 becomes quite clear. Judah has not taken Yahweh's Law to heart, but instead has turned aside to worship other gods and has taught her children to go after the fertility gods, in total violation of Deuteronomy's Law. At a personal level, Jeremiah could say that he "ate" Yahweh's words, and they became "to him a joy and the delight of his heart" (Jer 15:16)²⁵, that the word "was in" his "heart as it were a burning fire" (Jer 20: 9), that his "heart was broken" within

²⁴. Note: Other passages such as 2:14-17; 29-37 belong to a period after 609 BC. Specifically this would be the time leading to Josiah's death but after he had completed the reform. This might be an editorial concern that however doesn't affect the theological flow.

²⁵. Cf. Ezekiel 3: 1-3.

him “because of the Lord and because of his holy words” (Jer 23:9).²⁶ God’s words had really become part of his entire life.

Jeremiah developed the notion of transformation in the idea of a new covenant. In time to come, God will give Israel “one heart and one way” to fear and know him all the days, (Jer 32:39). Not only will they do no evil, they will love and cleave to the good. God will inscribe his Torah on their hearts, so that they need no longer teach each other to Know YHWH, for all will know him, young and old alike (31:31ff.). It appears Jeremiah had known from experience that it is difficult for mankind to keep God’s covenant, hence a transformed mankind whose heart God has refashioned, and upon which he had impressed his word as a seal. According to Jeremiah, it is the ‘inscribed law’ that will help keep the covenant. It will “program” the hearts and make God’s relationship with the people stronger and restore them to the divine self. He too, like Moses was a covenant mediator and both of them emphasize the role of the heart in the transformation of human consciousness. His entire message can be seen from the outset as one of “tearing down and building up.”²⁷

He made faith an intensely personal matter and that God would judge each man by what was in his heart: ‘I the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doing,’ (Jer 17:10). He pointed out the deceitfulness of the human heart, (Jer 17:9), and that Judah’s sin was written with a ‘pen of iron; with a point of diamond, the sin was engraved on the tablet of their heart, 17:1). According to Jeremiah, this was the main indictment

²⁶ . Achtemeier, *Deuteronomy, Jeremiah*, 51.

²⁷. Lundbom, Jack R, *Jeremiah*, 21-36. (AB New York: Doubleday, 1964), 371.

of God against his people. He is told to search diligently among the Judeans (“the remnant of Israel,” 6:9) to make sure he misses no one that will need the word of the Lord. But the truth is that the people’s ears like their hearts are “uncircumcised” (6:10; cf. 4:4). Consequently, the “war” of Yahweh against Israel, which Jeremiah had laid on his heart in his call, will be poured out upon the whole people (6:11).

Yahweh will bring the evil punishment upon them (6:19; 8:12) but the exact nature of that punishment is still unspecified. At the same time, a last chance is provided. Through repentance God would bring about transformation of the deceitful heart by making a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah: “I will put my law in them, and I will transcribe it on their ‘deceitful’ hearts, Jer 31: 31-33).²⁸

There are two but all related issues responsible for the transformation of Josiah. Foremost, in the eighth year of his reign, 632 B.C.E., Josiah began doing what was pleasing to the Lord, following the ways his father David, straying neither to the right nor to the left...and to seek the God of his father David” (2 Chr 34:2-3). Cf. The Way of Yahweh or walking in his ways in Deut 5:30-33; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16 as above. The Deuteronomist has here given Josiah an evaluation similar to that of king David. David walked before Yahweh “with integrity of heart and uprightness” 1 (Kings 9:4); David’s heart was “wholly true to Yahweh” (1 Kings 11:4); “David followed Yahweh completely” (1 Kings 11:6); he did according to “what pleased Yahweh and kept his statutes and commandments” (1 Kings 11:38); “he followed Yahweh with his whole heart, doing what only pleased Yahweh” 1

²⁸. Cf. Ezekiel 36:26-27: “A new heart I will give you, and a new Spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh...and make you follow my statutes.”

Kings 14:8). Judging from this evaluation, it is conceivable that by seeking God at an early stage of his life, Josiah allowed the commandments of the Lord to deepen his religious consciousness while cultivating an attitude of obedience like David. Second, the sort of preaching exhibited by Zephaniah and Jeremiah would compound his religious convictions. His internal beliefs would eventually shape his political and religious policies. He too like Jeremiah took faith as a personal matter and that God would judge him by what was on his (Josiah's) heart, according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doing, (Jer 17:10).

What is distinctive about Josiah's actions is not the fact that he eradicated idolatry, something that had been done by other reforming kings like Hezekiah. Rather, it is because he rendered it inoperative by uprooting established idolatrous institutions that had been in existence many years before him and by eliminating positions that were dependent on these institutions. He eliminated both idolatry and syncretism from Israel once and for all. He massacred the priests who served at high places in the North, treating them as if they were idolatrous. These had been appointed by earlier kings of Judah before him to serve in the high places in the cities of Judah, along with those who offered incense to Baal and the host of Heaven, (2 Kings 23:5). The cult of the host of heaven was a favorite to most women, (Jer 7:18ff; 44:15-25). He tore down the houses of the male cult prostitutes (*haqedessim*, v.7) and the high places (*habamot*, v.8) of the gates at the entrance to the city. He also defiled the Valley of Tophet in the Ben-hinnon Valley, which had been a cultic installation where children were offered to the god of Molech, (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6;

Jer 7:31; 19:11-13. He abolished the cult of the son god, which was bound up with the dedication of horses and chariots to this deity, (v.11).

Josiah destroyed the alters of the rooftops that the kings of Judah had made in order to offer incense on them, a ritual that was widespread in Judah at the time Zephaniah gave his fiery prophecy, (Zeph 1:5; Jer 7:18; 19:13; 32:29; 44:17. Josiah's most daring action was the desecration of the high places that King Solomon had built facing Jerusalem to the South of Mount Olives. Solomon had built these places in an act of evil in the sight of the Lord, (1 Kings 11: 4-8); and they had been in existence in Judah for more than three hundred years, and no king had dared to touch them. Even Hezekiah, who towered down the high places and pulverized the brazen serpent that Moses had made, did not have the courage to desecrate these high places because of the eminence of King Solomon. Notwithstanding, Josiah towered them down in a Yahwistic spiritual ideal.

In a most audacious action of reform, Josiah completely demolished the alter and the high place at Bethel (v.5) a place that had formerly been the king's sanctuary (Amos 7:13) and was considered to be the gate of heaven (Gen 28:17). He also towered down the shrines at the high places in the towns of Samaria (v.19). Even if an argument can be made that this ruthless eradication of syncretistic religious institutions was motivated by a political fervor, it is important to acknowledge the zeal of the king in this regard, and in particular his resolve in eliminating every remnant of pagan manifestation including those that had been in practice for three hundred years, such as the high places of Solomon. This is evidence of transformation, the like of which had not been witnessed among Israelite kings

before. The scriptural reference that “There was no king like him before who turned back to the Lord with all his heart and soul and might” (v.25), is therefore not an overstatement invented by an editor. Josiah, by seeking God’s commands with all heart, with all soul and with all strength, he allowed the authority imbued in these commands to change him and make him live for God. He led his people to spiritual heights where the ethical character of God and man’s duty to love God were emphasized.

In fact modern biblical interpreters have suggested that “With all soul ” corresponds to the demand in the vassal treaties to be prepared to die for the suzerain, and “with all your might” corresponds to the demand to come with all military forces to help the suzerain. It is therefore remarkable that Josiah sacrificed his life when he came with his army to fight the Egyptian king.²⁹ Although it was the primary duty of ancient Near Eastern monarchs to care for and to maintain the temples of their gods,³⁰ it is conceivable that Josiah might have seized the opportunity in taking advantage of this royal custom, and, with the “recovered law book” his duty for God in caring for the Temple became incomparable to no other king.

Later on in chapter two, I will elaborate in detail on the key role of transformation although I can briefly point out here that it operates in a triangular form, that is, on top there is God to whose allegiance, the entire range of human experience is to be conditioned in response to his demands while at the bottom of the base stand the Israelites (people), who relate to each other through norms

²⁹. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11*, AB 5, 77.

³⁰. Cogan, Mordechai and Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings*. AB 11, 293.

decreed by God. Consider, for instance this moral obligation: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am Yahweh” (Lev 19:18). This requirement suggests that a person living within God’s covenant have to take on the task of befriending another who also belongs to it. In other words, people relate to each other as vassals of the same suzerain bound together by the covenant just as it binds each of them to God. It turns out to be that the transformation achieved by the covenant is about social ethics. This view is largely compatible to Jon Levenson’s assertion that covenant theology is able to develop a coherent correlation between experience and morals’ especially public morals, the relationship between man and his neighbor.³¹ First though, let me make a brief connection between the Sinai covenant and the contemporary Christian society, which is the main subject of this dissertation.

Although Moses mediated the Sinai Covenant Law to a historically specific people namely Israel, through Christ, this covenant was opened to everyone outside of Israel. Christ’s attitude toward covenant law was one of respect and he had been cradled in it at the Nazareth synagogue and in his home. Moreover, he came “not to destroy it but to fulfill” it, with a richness of life never before demonstrated (Matt 5:17). He recognized that the Law had prepared him to receive the profound revelations committed to him by his heavenly Father, for which he would scarcely have been ready but for the preparatory discipline of the obeyed Law.³² Although he recognized that his mission to earth was first directed to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt 10:5f), he realized that Gentiles ultimately would trust in his name

³¹. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion, An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, 55.

³². Miller, Madeleine S & Miller, Lane J, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 384-385

(cf. Matt 12:21). Earlier along, during a ceremony for the purification of this Law at the Temple in Jerusalem at which Christ was brought for presentation to the Lord, Simon, an old priest had declared that Jesus would “light for the revelation of the Gentiles and for a glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:22).

The New Testament reports that Christ spent his personal ministry among the Greek cities of east of the Jordan, (Matt 4:25) cf. Mark 5, and Perea (a place under the jurisdiction of Herode Antipas (Matt 14:1). He did not hesitate to minister to Gentiles (cf. Matt 8:5-13; 15:21-28. Although he lived in a society composed of Jews, Greco-Roman people of culture, and perhaps more, to him all men were brothers, sons of one Father (John 8:41). Christ’s Disciples would at first meet in the Temple with other Jews. However, his rejection by the nation that he had come for culminated into the development of separate groups, companies of disciples, soon to be referred to as “the church” (Acts 2:47).

That covenant law was opened to non- Israelites cannot be less clearer from Paul, who as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) could not be shy about his knowledge of the Law, the prophets, and his advanced skills of Aramaic and Hebrew languages (Acts 21:40; 22:2; 23:6; Gal 1:14). He was also familiar with Greek, the language of the commercial street of Tarsus (Acts 21:37). At about the age 20, he attended the rabbinical school of the Pharisees under the famous Gamariel at Jerusalem, and in spite of the liberal influences of Gamariel, Paul succumbed to student fanaticism and aided those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:58; 8:1).³³ Stephen had been charged with fomenting religious subversion (Acts 6:14). This event increased Paul’s popularity

³³. Miller, Madeleine S & Miller, Lane J. *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 350.

with the high priest, and made him leader among the fanatics (8:3), but resulted in his inner conflict (Acts 9:4f; 22:2; 26:10; Rom 6-7). Equipped with letters of endorsement from the high priest, Paul sent out to Damascus to hunt for the followers of Jesus of Nazareth and to bring them bound to Jerusalem for trial and death.

Paul's physical, mental, morals and spiritual conversion on the road to Damascus (A.D 34) would revolutionize his intellectual life, redefine his religious objectives and turn the enthusiastic prosecutor of Christianity into its most ardent promoter (Acts 9:19-22), particularly so for gentiles. There are three detailed accounts of this event (Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26: 1-23), and several references to it recorded in his letters (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; Gal 1:15f; Eph 3:3; Phil 3:12), indicating its vividness and its lasting importance to Paul. He reiterates his total commitment to the Gospel of Christ by referring to himself as a slave (*dulos*), Rom 1:1; Col 1:23; Titus 1:1 Else where, he starts most of his letters referring to himself as a messenger (*apostolos*) of Christ, Rom 11:13; 1 Cor 1:1; 9:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1, with the exception of Eph 3:1 where he calls himself a prisoner (*desmios*) for Christ.

As the one by whom and through whom the covenant of Israel is opened to mankind, Christ presented himself as the fulfiller of the Covenant Law, and that if gentiles could believe in him; they could become heirs to the promises of God to Israel. Paul expounds this notion while addressing gentile converts: "Remember that you were aliens to the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. But now, through your union with Christ Jesus, you, who were once far

away, have, ...been brought near...so that you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens of God's people and the family of God", (Eph 2:12-19). Else where, Paul says: "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heir according to the promise, (Gal 3:29). Through Christ, a new covenant-community is created-the Church, the "Body of Christ" (Eph 1:23; 4:25; 5:30; Col 1: 24). Through Christ, Israel's Heilsgeschichte becomes the redemptive history of gentiles by making them co-heirs to the promises and blessings³⁴ of God. However, it goes without saying that this entry into the covenant of God has no transformative objectives. In fact, Christ asserts that one has to be born again of water and spirit.³⁵ Paul, also reiterates the notion of transformation to his Corinthian audience that: " So if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! And this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ," (2 Cor 5: 17-18). This concept of covenant and transformation then leads me to ask questions that will be the subject of chapter 3 and that is: How is it possible to belong to a covenant which clearly abhors and prohibit revenge and violence, yet, the church of Rwanda directly participated in the genocide of 1994 in

³⁴. Christian interpreters favorably view the call of Abraham (Gen 12) to be beyond Abraham and his descendants. This view is supported by two possible interpretations of Gen 12:3, by which the Hebrew verb for "to bless" in the final phrase may be rendered either passive or reflective. Both interpretations are equally plausible and they can lead any interpreter to his/her theological preference. The NRV's passive rendering, *will be blessed* is most preferred by the Christian interpretation, cf. Gal 3:8, which implies that God's blessings and salvation are given to the whole world through Abraham. The TANAKH's reflective rendering, *shall bless themselves*, implies that people will take Abraham's blessings and well-being as the desired standard when asking for a blessing for themselves: "May we be as blessed as Abraham." Also see, Theodore Hiebert, "Genesis", *The New Interpreter's Study Bible*, New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha, Edited by Walter J. Harrelson, Abingdon Press, p. 27.

³⁵. See The Gospel according to John 3:5-8.

which an estimated one million people got killed? Why were most massacres carried out in church buildings with ease and impunity? If the population is overwhelmingly Christian, and yet, nearly one million people were killed, were Christians killing fellow Christians? Why were churches not only reflecting tensions of the society but even increasing and fostering those tension? (Mamdani, 2001, pp.225-233).

Although I have so far dealt with the general concept of covenant Law and transformation, let me now specifically discuss how the Sinai covenant transformed the custom of transgenerational revenge in ancient Israel.

Chapter Two

The Custom of Blood Vengeance in Israel and in her Ancient Near Eastern Neighbors

This chapter traces the notion of blood vengeance in ancient Israel and her ancient Near Eastern neighbors, particularly the practices of vengeance that were extended beyond the real perpetrators of the crime to affect children or other family members. The chapter uses biblical and extra-biblical literature to indicate the contemporaneous parallels in ancient Israel and the ancient Near East, but the focus is an analysis of king Amaziah's deed, when he invoked a Mosaic injunction: "Parents shall not be put to death for the children, nor children be put to death for parents; a person shall be put to death only for his own crime" (Deut 24:16). It is assumed that this was a radical and risky innovation, but a form of administration of justice that potentially was transformative in the way society discriminated between the guilty and innocent. Specific cases in ancient Israel are cited to show how this custom prevailed or how it influenced the notion of revenge in the pre-monarchal period until the reign of king Amaziah in the 8th Century B.C.E.

Although the issue at heart is Covenant law and how it transformed the custom of transgenerational blood vengeance in ancient Israel, this discussion includes Jeremiah and Ezekiel who represent a different tradition, namely that of the prophets for the following reasons: First of all, we have observed that Jeremiah came from the Priestly lineage of Anathoth where Ephraim and Benjamin cherished

the Exodus and the Sinai covenant traditions.³⁶ He recognizes that Israel broke the covenant but that in the coming days God will inscribe his law on Israel's heart and refashion her thinking. His concepts of hope and a new covenant are significant for my study because they offer possibilities of a 'new horizon' in transforming the Rwandan society from genocidal attitudes and practices.

Second, since Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, the scholarship of Von Rad, Moshe Greenberg, Gordon Matties, and most recently John Collins and Paul Joyce have consistently continued to assign Ezekiel to the Priestly group, not only because of his birthright, but because these scholars think (of course with slight variations) that the book which bears his name is filled with Priestly terminology and forms.³⁷ In fact Von Rad adds that - "was Hesekiel verkundete, ging weit hinaus uber das, was ein Priester im Bereich seines Amtes einem Laien zusprechen konnte, und es lasst sich leicht zeigen, wo und inwiefern seine Botschaft die Fundamente Dieser priesterlichen Theologie sprengte."³⁸ Paul Joyce has pointed out that "Ezekiel is explicitly called a priest. This is a determinative feature of Ezekiel and his book, marked by the thought and style of the priestly movement."³⁹ There is no doubt therefore that one effect of this background was his sacral

³⁶. Von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Vol., 2, Die Theologie der prophetischen Uberlieferungen Israels, Chr. Kaiser Verlag Munchen, 1960, 203. Also, John Bright on 'The Prophet of Yahweh's Judgment', in *A History of Israel*, 313.

³⁷. Wellhausen, Julius, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 404-405: repr. of the article Israel from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* with preface by W. Robertson Smith: Atlanta, 1994): repr. of the edition of *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885); Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 2, 223-237; Greenberg, Moshe, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB 22 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 40; Matties, Gordon H, *Ezekiel 18 and the Rhetoric of Moral Discourse*. SBL Dissertation Series 126, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 11.

³⁸. Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 2, 239.

³⁹. Joyce, Paul M, *Ezekiel*. (London: T & T Clark, 2007), 67.

understanding of the new Israel. It informs his notion of individual righteousness and the urgency with which he drags an individual into the domain of personal righteousness. It is this rationale of individual righteousness that leads him to appropriate Amaziah's act of making a distinction between children and their parents who committed the sinful acts. Jeremiah's concept of a new covenant inscribed on the human heart and Ezekiel's insistence of individual righteousness are the two complementary elements that my study proposes to integrate in anticipation of transforming the community of Rwanda from revenge and genocide tendencies. First though, let me start with the custom of blood vengeance in ancient Israel and her ancient Near Eastern neighbors.

The custom of blood revenge was common in the ancient Near East and still persists in certain traditional societies of the modern Near East.⁴⁰ From the collections of laws from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor, we know that there existed the notion that members of a man's family were an extension of his own personality, rather than individuals in their own right. This notion could be taken to an extreme so that if a man harmed a member of another's family, he was punished by the same harm being done to a member of his own family, often the corresponding member. Thus, we read from the Code of Hammurabi:

"If a seignior struck another seignior's daughter and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for he fetus. If that woman has died, they shall put his daughter to death."⁴¹ Also, consider a case in which a builder

⁴⁰. Cogan, Mordechai & Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings, AB 11*, 155.

⁴¹. Pritchard, James, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed.: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 175.

constructed a house for a seignior but did not make his work strong with the result that the house collapsed on the owner's son. In this case, the son of the builder would be put to death instead of punishing the real builder, his father.⁴² This type of slaughter is the duty required of the nearest of kin who acts as the avenger of blood, a practice that remains a surviving force among the Bedouin up to the present day.⁴³ It is considered as righting the imbalance in the community caused by the original loss.

This notion of revenge, the principle that the punishment for an offence should be commensurate to the crime referred to as *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) was prevalent among Israelite customs ("a life for a life"; Exod 21: 23-25). The blood redeemer, (Hb: *go'el had-dam*), is in effect the avenger, the executioner of the practice, (Num 35: 16-21). The avenger (or "avenger of blood" vv 19, 21) is a close relative (a kinsman) of a murder victim whom the community allows to avenge the death by killing the murderer. The community sanctions this retribution within the bounds of talion (Exod 21:23), and only on the person of the culprit (Deut 24:16). The redeemer is restricted through the agency of the asylum, which, by giving refuge to the homicide from the hand of the redeemer, makes it possible for the communal-juridical institutions to interpose between them. Once the case has been brought to the public court, the redeemer no longer has a say on the case. If the court finds the accused guilty of murder, the law requires that he be put to death,

⁴². Pritchard, *ANET*, 176.

⁴³. Driver, G.R and J.C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws, A Translation and Commentary* (Scientia Verlag Aalen: Germany, 1975), 33-34.

and the execution is the prerogative of the kinsman (Deut 19:12).⁴⁴ The kinsman is not free to pardon or accept any monetary compensation instead (Num 35:31). Kinship requires and defines the obligation of relatives to “redeem” that is, rectify vital losses suffered by the kin when the latter are unable to do so, such as redeeming an enslaved kinsman, redeeming his real estate, marrying his widow, even receiving reparations due to his estate.

The lex talionis as seen in Exod 21: 23-25 was applied as a single standard for all people, whether stranger or native (Lev 24:22). This notion served as the justification for Gideon’s actions in slaying the Midianites for killing his brothers (Judg 8:18-21). However, when Joab slew Abner ben Ner (king Saul’s cousin and chief of Saul’s army) for killing his brother Asahel in combat at Gibeon (2 Sam 3:27, 30); and also killed Amasa (son of David’s sister Abigail, formerly a commander of Absalom’s rebellious army (2 Sam 20:10), whom David had appointed as commander (2 Sam 19:14), these actions were considered criminal because he shed the blood of two prominent warriors during a peaceful time. It is inferred in 1 Kings 2:5 that killing in combat does not normally require blood redemption. This notion will account for David’s failure to hold Joab guilty for slaying his rebellious son Absalom, even when he had given orders to all commanders in a public hearing that no harm should come to his son (2 Sam 18:5,14). It appears, therefore, that Joab had personal scores to settle with Abner ben Ner and Amasa ben Jether but committed these two crimes under the guise of the talion principle (“life for a life” Exod 21:24).

⁴⁴. Greenberg, Moshe, “Avenger of Blood”, *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, An illustrated Encyclopedia*, Edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville, 1962), 321.

Although the *lex talionis* never replaced the kinship form of prosecution of homicide with a public one, under the monarchy it appears the king had the powers to intervene by punishing or granting immunity to a slayer from the avenger (2 Sam 14:8-11). To this end, all matters pertaining to the prosecution of homicide had come under the control of the state. After all, the king is to administer justice (*mishpat*). This can account for king David's discretionary and tactical authority to refrain from punishing Joab for the lives of Abner ben Ner and Amasa ben Jether whom Joab killed in peacetime. Unlike blood shed during war, murder in peacetime was actionable, and Joab was thus guilty on two accounts, since Abner and Amasa were both at peace with David at the time they were struck down⁴⁵ (cf. 1 Kings 2:5). When David learned of the tragic death of Abner, he disavowed publicly all complicity in the dastardly deed, laid a grievous curse upon Joab and his house and proclaimed a public lamentation for Abner. In deep grief, the king fasted and composed an appropriate dirge (partially preserved in 2 Sam 3:33-34), in which he bewailed the strange fate, so unworthy of such a prince, that had befallen Abner (vss 28-34)⁴⁶. In spite of this outrage David let Joab remain as army commander till the end, and at times showed the considerable amount of trust he had in him, though perhaps as a man experienced in treachery (2 Sam 11:14-26).

So why couldn't David punish Joab for murdering Abner? The decision was political and tactical. First, in this politically crucial hour when David's relationship to the northern tribes hung in the balance, he seems not to have been sufficiently

⁴⁵. Cogan, Mordechai, *1 Kings, AB 10* (New York: Doubleday, New York, 1964), 173.

⁴⁶. Dalglish, Edward R, "Abner", *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 12.

secure in his own position to bring Joab publicly to justice (2 Sam 3:39). Punishing Joab could have scared off those with skeptical minds and the whole thing could have spelled disaster for his effort to unite the monarchy. Instead, he resorted to convincing the people of his complete innocence and sincere regret for the unfortunate murder of Abner (2 Sam 3:36-39). Apparently this plan paid off well as the people became pleased with the king's actions (2 Sam 11:36). Second, it was a tactical decision because there would be a time when Joab would have to pay for these crimes even after David's death. This is exactly what David accomplished in his charge to Solomon: "You know what he did to Abner ben Ner and Amasa ben Jether whom he murdered retaliating in a time of peace for blood that had been shed in war. But do not allow his gray head to go down to Sheol in peace" (1 Kings 2: 5-6, 32). In this case, Solomon would render unto Joab the deserved punishment.

The Middle Assyrian Laws mention occasions when the offender's family might be punished along with him. For instance: "If a seignior struck another seignior's wife and caused her to have a miscarriage, they shall treat the wife of the seignior, who caused the other seignior's wife to have a miscarriage, as he treated her; he shall compensate for her fetus with a life. However, if that woman died, they shall put the seignior to death, he shall compensate for her fetus with (his) a life. But when that woman's husband has no son, if someone struck her so that she had a miscarriage, they shall put the striker to death; even if her fetus is a girl, he shall compensate for a life."⁴⁷ Also, in order to insure the purity of the Hittite king, the kitchen personnel are instructed that should anyone do something in an unclean

⁴⁷. Pritchard, *ANET*, 185.

way or should anyone arouse the king's displeasure, that man, together with his wife and his children shall be put to death.⁴⁸ A similar warning is given to a temple official who negligently fails to put out a fire: "he who commits the crime will perish together with his descendants."⁴⁹

Similarly, ancient Israelite society practiced blood revenge that was extended beyond the actual perpetrators of the crime. The story of the Levite's concubine in Judges 19-21 illustrates this notion of revenge. Members of the tribe of Benjamin raped and murdered a concubine who had Judean parents but a Levite husband and both man and woman were living in the territory of Ephraim. The aggrieved Levite sent out a call for retribution to all the tribes of Israel who in turn called upon the entire tribe of Benjamin. The significance of this story is that the Levite's actions (cutting his dead concubine into pieces and sending them throughout the whole extent of Israelite territory) are treated as an acceptable call for vengeance (Judges 20:6-7). Thus the narrative in 20:1-48 recounts that the tribal assembly condemns the crime of the Benjaminites against the Levite's concubine and takes steps to punish them. In the ensuing war, all the towns of Benjamin were destroyed: "So all who fell that day of Benjamin were twenty-five thousand arms-bearing men... and only six hundred...escaped to the rock of Rimmon (20:46-47).

Apart from the single case of the Levite's concubine, the Hebrew Bible portrays Israel as a family before God with a sense of a fundamental collective responsibility. To a large extent this notion plays into the bible's concept of corporate responsibility. God visits the iniquity of parents on children and keeps

⁴⁸. Pritchard, *ANET*, 207.

⁴⁹. Prichard, *ANET*, 209.

mercy to the thousandth generation (Exod 20:5-6; 34:7; Deut 5:9-10; 7:9-10). The scope of collective responsibility might also extend even to a larger group, a city or kingdom. A king's disobedience is particularly apt to bring condemnation on his entire realm (Gen 20:9; 26:10). Many of the catastrophes that befell Israel are explained as caused by royal sin. For instance, Saul's sin caused the subjection of Israel to the Philistines (1 Sam 28:18-19). David's sin with Bathsheba meant that the sword would never depart from his house and brought about the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam 12: 10-11). Solomon's sins were the cause of the division of the kingdom (1 Kgs 11:9-11). The foundation for this royal responsibility is not natural like that of a family or kin group, but rather artificial. It is the covenant that God made with the people and which was made in terms of eternal obligations:

"You stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, both he who hews your wood and he who draws your water, that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the Lord your God, which the Lord your God makes with you this day, that he may establish you this day as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob" (Deut 29:10-13).

There is, therefore, the idea of a common responsibility not only among all the members of a given generation, but among all generations as well. "Every sin committed by part of the people is counted against Israel and serves to explain the

fate of the entire people.”⁵⁰ We can compare this to the justification for the ‘official view’ that judgment finally came upon Judah because of the sins of Manasseh (Jer 15:4; cf. 2 Kgs 21:10-15; 23:26-27; 24:3-4).

Israelite society also had instances where usurpers carried out massive killings by exterminating all family members of the former king or all those who were potential rivals and avengers. During the period of Judges, after Gideon declined to be made king of Israel, his son Abimelech sought the opportunity and killed seventy of his brothers at his father’s house on one stone (Judges 9:1-6). Jehu the tenth king of Israel after the kingdom split (841-814 B.C), killed king Joram of northern Israel and king Ahaziah of Judah respectively when he usurped power in a military coup. In a further blood bath at Jezreel, he butchered king Joram’s entire household including his closest friends and priests (2 Kings 10:1-11). Along the way to Samaria he killed a party of kinsmen of the slain king Ahaziah of Judah. In Samaria Jehu also ordered the slaughter of forty-two princes and sons of the remaining members of Ahab’s family and did not leave a single one of them alive (2 Kings 10:12-14; 17). On learning of the death of her son Ahaziah, Athaliah-daughter of king Ahab and Jezebel the Phoenician queen, granddaughter of Omri and wife to Jehoram king of Judah, ruthlessly had all the other Davidic offspring murdered. Athaliah seized the throne and became the only woman ruler of Israel in 841-835 BC (2 Chr 22: 10-12).

Although David for political and strategic reasons could not execute Joab for murdering both Abner ben Ner and Amasa ben Jether, the king’s words while

⁵⁰. Kaufmann, Yehezkel, *The Religion of Israel From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, 331.

mourning were recriminatory and carried a curse that extended beyond Joab: "May the guilt fall on the head of Joab and upon all his father's house; and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or who is leprous, or who holds a spindle, or who is slain by the sword, or who lack bread" (2 Sam 3:29). When Solomon eventually ordered the death of Joab, he reiterated the same words: "So shall the blood of Abner ben Ner, ...and Amasa ben Jether come back on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants" (1 Kings 2:33).

Until this point I have not intended nor should I feel it necessary to go further into the details of who avenged whom or how many were killed in the process and whether or not it was legal. Rather, I have been demonstrating that blood vengeance and mass atrocities by usurpers were acceptable practices and to some extent were common both in Israelite society and the society of her ancient Middle Eastern neighbors. I have also indicated that ancient Israelite and neighboring societies accepted practices where children and wives were embraced by the retribution meted out to fathers and husbands. As noted earlier, if a person is slain, his kin takes vengeance for him upon the slayer, or on one of the slayer's kinship group. This in turn could give rise to countervengeance, and a blood feud, terminating at times only with the extinction of a family, is set in motion.

However, when king Amaziah (800-783 B.C) ascended the throne of Judah he challenged this practice in Israelite society. The son of the assassinated king Joash of Judah (835-796 B.C), Amaziah became king at the age of twenty-five while his father's murderers and the conniving priesthood were apparently still alive and serving in the palace. After he was firmly established, he had the murderers of his

father executed but he was careful to spare their children in accordance with the Mosaic injunction: 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin' (2 Kings 14: 5-6). His act of sparing the sons of his father's assassins is in line with Deut 24:16. It was an innovation and quite revolutionary in the administration of justice for it marked a departure from the customary practice. Basing his decision on covenant law, the king had set himself and Israelite society on a path to transform the custom of blood revenge across generations.

When we consider that Christians have expanded and embraced the concept of the Sinai covenant (see Chap. One), we must acknowledge that Christians are deeply challenged by these teachings to transform practices of revenge, countervengeance and genocide as was done in ancient Israel. However, let me first discuss the case of king Amaziah and demonstrate that his behavior is a precedent for other people such as those of Rwanda who participated in the genocide of 1994. In fact, his behavior can also be a precedent for any society that is still blighted with revenge and countervengeance.

In order to understand king Amaziah of Judah (800-783 B.C), it is necessary to give a family history of the king, which involves a chain of massacres and assassinations starting with his grandfather, king Ahaziah of Judah (843-842 B.C). Amaziah, the ninth king of Judah after the monarchy split, was the son of Joash (Joash is the abbreviated form of Jehoash and both names are used interchangeably in 2 Kings 12) and grandson of Ahaziah, both kings of Judah. When Joash was still an infant his father king Ahaziah was killed in Jehu's revolt in the kingdom of Israel.

Joash's grandmother Athaliah, a daughter of the domineering Phoenician Queen Jezebel, had all the royal offspring massacred and seized the throne herself (see above). The only one to escape and survive was Joash because his aunt Jehosheba stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be massacred. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah and for six years he remained secretly hidden in the temple of the Lord under the protection of the high priest Jehoiada while Queen Athaliah ruled the land (2 Kings 11: 1-3; 2 Chr 22:10-12).

When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada the high priest had him crowned king in the temple under the protection of the palace guard and then presented him to the excited crowd. As soon as Queen Athaliah heard the excitement of the people outside, she rushed to the scene but was killed by the guards at the orders of Jehoiada (2 Kings 11:13-16; 2 Chr 23:12-15). The Deuteronomistic historian gives credit to the priest Jehoiada for his instructions to the king and for his faithfulness. Jehoiada influenced both the political and the religious life of the kingdom and served as the king's tutor, instructing the king in Israel's religious traditions (2 Kings 2:3). The Dtr historian's only negative criticism of Joash was that he tolerated the cult on the bamot, (see 2 Kings 12:3).

One of Joash's main achievements was his renovation of Solomon's Temple, which had been all but abandoned during the reign of Queen Athaliah. In the twenty-third year of his reign, he became aware that the priests had become negligent, even somewhat inept in their work of collecting offerings for the renovation of the Temple (2 Kings 12:7). He then relieved the priests of this work,

ordered the gifts to be collected in a special cash box at the entrance of the Temple under the supervision of the king's officials and to be paid over directly to the contractors and work men. Consequently the priesthood lost its influence on the throne and naturally became unhappy. The Chronicler reports that Joash remained faithful to the Lord as long as Jehoiada lived (2 Chr 24:1-16). However, following the death of the faithful priest at a very old age, the king fell into the sins of his ancestors (vv.17-27). He abandoned the Temple and returned to idolatry. This apostasy earned him a prophetic rebuke from Zechariah, who had succeeded Jehoiada his father. Unfortunately Joash took Zechariah's rebuke as trouble and had him publicly executed: "Joash did not recall the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had showed him but killed his son" (2 Chr 24:22). Later on, when Joash was lying on his bed recovering from wounds inflicted during a war with Arameans, two of his servants, Jozabad son of Shimeath (also known as Jozacar) and Jehozabad son of Shomer assassinated him and buried him in the city of David (2Kings 12:21).

It is not very clear why these two court servants assassinated the king. The Chronicler in 2 Chr 24:26, reports that the assassins were the sons of foreign women, Jozabad son of Shimeath the Ammonitess, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabitess. Cogan Mordechai and Hayim Tadmor have suggested that this reference to their biographical backgrounds appears to be exegetical amplification bringing home the point: "the ungrateful rose up and exacted recompense from Joash the ungrateful, as it is written: 'King Joash disregarded the loyalty which Jehoiada had shown to him' "⁵¹. It is also conceivable that the priesthood had

⁵¹. Mordechai, Cogan & Hayim, Tadmor, *2 Kings*, AB 11, 139.

become alienated and felt hostility toward the king after he relieved them of their responsibility and authority with respect to the work for the renovation of Solomon's Temple. In fact the Chronicler in 2 Chr 24:17-22 hints at the tensions between the king and court officials. Such bad feelings, as well as the public execution of Zechariah might account for the king's assassination. Neither the author of the books of Kings nor Chronicler directly point out that priests were responsible for the king's death, but it is also difficult not to imagine that they felt relieved at his death. In fact some scholars have used the phrase: "...because of the blood of the son of the priest Jehoiada" in 2 Chr 24:25 to suggest that priests connived with the assassins in the king's death.⁵² The fact that his servants were able to devise a conspiracy and kill him (2 Kings 12:20) is evidence that more people than the actual killers connived at this assassination.

Amaziah, son of the thus murdered king Joash, succeeded to the throne, but the assassins of his father were still alive and serving in the palace. As we have seen, when he was firmly established he had the two murderers executed but he was careful to spare their children in accordance with the Mosaic injunction: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall die for his own sin." (2 Kings 14:6). Considering his family history, this sparing the sons of his father's assassins was a surprising act of moderation. We may well ask why he was able to thus innovate in the administration of justice and break away from the customs of his time and society where blood vengeance involving family members extended over generations. How

⁵². Cf. Comay, Joan, "Amaziah", *Who's Who in the Old Testament together with Apocrypha* (New York: Wings Books, 1993), 48.

did the Deuteronomic law (Deut 24:16), which is quoted in the account of his action enable Amaziah to make such a radical decision?

In the base text (2 Kings 14:5-6), the phraseology of v. 6, "But he did not put to death the sons of the assassins, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Teachings of Moses which Yahweh commanded", reveals that king Amaziah was guided by the Lord's command. The best explanation for his restraint seems to be that in the face of a revenge crisis, the king treated the Teachings of Moses with a radical seriousness. Amaziah's behavior in these circumstances particularly resonates with the actions king Josiah as we have seen in chapter one, Josiah allowed the commandments of the Lord to deepen his religious consciousness and this cultivated in him an attitude of obedience. Similarly, it was about obedience to the Sinai Law that was at work here in Amaziah. The inherent authority of the law elicited from him an ethical insight. He quoted the law, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children; children shall not be put to death for their fathers", and thus justified his radical, even risky, decision. This ethical consciousness arose from the basic principles of Hebrew religion: To believe that Yahweh alone is Lord and to practice what he has commanded is to do his will; to do his will is to enthrone him in Lordship and to recognize a higher authority above the political power of the king. Amaziah was thus able to forego the practice of transgenerational revenge and to establish a new precedent, a new norm.

Amaziah's reign is divided into two parts namely the initial relatively faithful period (2 Chr 25:1-13), and the subsequent faithless period (2 Chr 25:14-28). The Deuteronomistic historian considers him a good king initially by the earlier history

and that he acted faithfully at the start of his reign yet not like his ancestor David (2 Kgs 14:3). The Chronicler in 2 Chr 25:2 qualifies the evaluation that Amaziah “did what was right in the sight of the Lord,” by omitting the phrase “yet not like his ancestor David” (2 Kgs 14:3) and adding yet not with a true heart. While this might refer to the transgressions of the second period of his reign such as the hiring of mercenaries in his military campaigns, still his leniency and conformity to the law of Deuteronomy in Deut 24:16 limiting revenge cannot not be over looked. I think the Dtr historian would have preferred the phrase: ‘serving God fully as did his ancestor David’ while the Chronicler would have preferred ‘serving God with a true heart for all his time’.

Israel, originally at Mount Sinai, accepted her place in the suzerain-vassal relationship: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient” (Exod 24:7). It would then have defeated the purpose of this relationship if Amaziah had acted differently. The irony is that a king could do ne thing right and the other wrong whereas covenant law mandates that everything ought to be done right. This is the reason that most Israelite kings received negative Deuteronomistic evaluations for failing many aspects of the Sinai covenant, since they did not recognize the significance of the exclusive loyalty that was central to this relationship. Moreover, it was not from lack of accessibility to the law that a king became ignorant of what it said or did not say, for tradition demanded that he personally make a copy of the Teachings and must continue to study it while he was in office (Deut 17:18). Tigay has pointed out that since the king is under his own authority and no one will rebuke him for his actions, and he has the power to harm

the people, he must study God's Teachings as a safeguard and constant reminder to subdue his selfish inclinations and obey God.⁵³ It seems then that the common Deuteronomistic phrase used in reference to kings namely, 'he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord,' reveals a choice that some kings made in disobeying the law rather than any lack of knowledge about what should be done. Kings like other ordinary human beings have the freedom to defy God's will, and this freedom is the root of disobedience.

Some modern scholars like Mordechai Cogan and Tadmor Hayim have suggested that it is not clear whether the Deuteronomistic historian meant that Amaziah was actually guided by the nucleus of the book of the Teachings of Moses which might have existed at this time or that this is the historian's reflection on Amaziah's act vis-à-vis the norms current at the time the text of Kings was being edited after the Josianic reform.⁵⁴ Indeed, the hand of the Deuteronomistic editor is detected earlier on in 2 Kgs 11 at the coronation of king Joash (Amaziah's father) when Jehoiada, the high priest made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people. The phraseology of v.17 and the immediate placement of v.18 thereafter raise suspicion that the historian's ideological considerations might have shaped not only this text but perhaps the entire book of Kings. That said, it is important to recall that ancient historians were simply able to redact traditions but did not author them. All I am suggesting is that the Deuteronomistic historian redacted but did not author the account of king Amaziah's unique stand in invoking the law that moderated and limited vengeance.

⁵³. Jeffrey, Tigay H, *Deuteronomy*, 1-11, 168.

⁵⁴. Mordechai, Cogan & Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings*, AB 11, 155.

Although the covenant created an artificial sense of family responsibility before God which might entail corporate retribution (see above), yet the Hebrew Bible also expresses a feeling that the most fitting and just retribution is that which befalls the sinner himself. The more restricted the scope of collective responsibility, the more the just the punishment meted out. So we read complaints lodged against collective responsibility: "Will one man sin, and you be angry with the whole congregation?" (Num 16:22); "He said to the Lord, 'I alone am guilty, I alone have done wrong; but these poor sheep, what have they done?'" (2Sam 24:17). Kaufmann pointed out that in the narratives about Jonathan (1 Sam 14:24ff) and Jonah, only the strictest individual retribution is regarded as just. Even in the story of Jonah, however, one finds the notion that the doom of one man is liable to envelop so random an assemblage as the travelers on a ship (Jonah 1:7-15).⁵⁵ That said, the bulk of Hebrew Scriptures indicates that corporate responsibility was the norm, where blessings and curses of the covenant applied to the people as a whole without exceptions for individual behavior⁵⁶. It was not until the period of Jeremiah and Ezekiel that moral reason raised the question "why" should the offspring of a sinful generation be responsible for the sin in question. This period indeed marked a shift as I intend to show in the next discussion.

⁵⁵ . Kaufmann, Yehezkel, *The Religion of Israel From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, 331.

⁵⁶. Collins, John J, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 367.

Jeremiah's eschatological appropriation of Amaziah's action of 2 Kgs 14:5-6

In chapter one I mentioned that Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry in 627-626 BCE, but I would like to add here that one of the most distinctive features of his prophecy is the critical sense of an impending disaster which, as John Collins has observed, informs many of his poetic oracles⁵⁷. Indeed, the reader cannot fail to have a sense of the threatening situation expressed in Jeremiah's inaugural vision, "I see a boiling pot tilted away from the north" (Jer 1:13). This disaster shall break out from the north because of Israel's apostasy forsaking the worship of Yahweh to give herself up for the worship of Baal (Jer 1:16), and according to Von Rad, "Dieser Abfall reicht in eine ferne Vergangenheit zuruck (Jer 2:20)."⁵⁸ The prophet upbraided the people for various offences, and sometimes called for repentance, but most of his oracles left an impression that doom was inevitable, and that the most important thing was for the people to come to terms with that fact.⁵⁹ He could not bring himself to reject the complaint of his generation that they suffered for the sins of their fathers. In fact, the doctrine of retribution pervades the bulk of his prophecy. He not only cites the verse "You show kindness to the thousandth generation, but visit the guilt of the fathers upon their children after them" (Jer 32: 18), but this is his view as well. He believes that the exile and destruction of his generation are "on account of King Manasseh son of Hezekiah of Judah" (Jer 15:4).⁶⁰ When he gave prayers of vengeance against the men of Anathoth, he included the plea that "their

⁵⁷. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 338.

⁵⁸. Von Rad, Gerhard, *Theologie*, Vol.2, 205.

⁵⁹. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 339.

⁶⁰. Similarly, 2 Kgs 21:10-15; 23:26-27; 24:3-4.

sons and daughters may die in famine" (Jer 11:22; cf. 18:21). There are scholars like Von Rad who suggested that the Deuteronomistic theology of history still reckoned with the effect of an evil that criss-crossed the generations, and made it a basic factor in its whole way of looking at history.⁶¹ This statement is only true only if we consider that "Deuteronomistic editors of Jeremiah's book undoubtedly viewed him through the lens of their theology."⁶² Otherwise, a counter argument suggests that Jeremiah inherited the traditions that are found written in Deuteronomy (see chapter one).

Addressing himself to the question of retribution, Jack R. Lundbom has observed that Jeremiah's answer is future-oriented with no immediate application.⁶³ He employed a proverb: "In those days they shall no longer say: 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth become set on edge.'" (Jer 31:29). Apparently, this was an existing proverb being widely quoted in Judah and Babylon among the exiles following 586 BC,⁶⁴ (cf. Ezek 18:1). It asserted that the generation of exile was fated to suffer the consequences of choices made in Jerusalem prior to the destruction.⁶⁵ However, the continued application of this proverb was raising serious concerns since the present generation might have concluded, and did conclude, that as children of transgressors they were not themselves responsible for the sin in question.⁶⁶ About a century ago, Kaufmann suggested that Jeremiah's

⁶¹. Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 1, 390.

⁶². Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 337-338.

⁶³. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 461.

⁶⁴. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 21-36, 461.

⁶⁵. Brueggemann, Walter, *A Commentary on Jeremiah, Exile & Homecoming* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1998), 291.

⁶⁶. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 462.

response to the question “why” and his use of the proverb in Jer 31:29 should not give imply that he innovated the doctrine of individual retribution but rather it is an element of his messianic vision that each man will die for his own sins.⁶⁷

Unfortunately, Kaufmann did not give this text the further detailed explication required to demonstrate how this messianic concept would work although he mentions it twice on different occasions⁶⁸. His contemporary author, Von Rad would not necessarily disagree and has pointed out that there is no answer to the question “why”: “sondern einen Horizont von noch grosseren Leiden und Anfechtungen sichtbar machen.”⁶⁹

It is the recent scholarship of Walter Brueggemann and John Collins that has added a new dimension to this debate. Both agree on positioning Jeremiah’s response within the larger context of hope, another important aspect of the prophecy. Brueggemann suggests that we should not read Jer 31:29 in isolation but that it makes better sense if readers start from Jer 31:27, a promissory oracle which anticipates a new beginning for Israel and Judah, a new beginning after the old communities have been put to death.⁷⁰ He notes that Verse 28 repeats the six verbs namely, to pluck up, to pull down, to destroy, to overthrow, to build up and to plant, which set the theme of Jeremiah’s tradition in 1:10. The four earlier negative verbs are intensified by the addition of a fifth one, “to bring evil.” That view of the negatives, however, is only a backdrop for the oracle. According to Brueggemann, what counts now for the poem are the two positive verbs, “to plant and to build” for

⁶⁷. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 417

⁶⁸. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 417 & 439.

⁶⁹. Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 2, 279.

⁷⁰. Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 289.

they bespeak a full resumption of life.⁷¹ He therefore thinks that the picture should not be colored by the consequences of resignation and despair at the destruction because it is not only plucking up and tearing down, or destroying and overthrowing but it is also about building and planting. According to Brueggemann to plant and to build anticipate newness from God. This means that each new generation can refute the proverb by acting out its own destiny and choosing its own future with God. "The refutation of the proverb, and therefore the dismissal of conventional wisdom, asserts that newness is possible for the generation of the Exile. God can indeed "plant and build" for and with and in that generation.⁷²

John Collins adds that the citation of this proverb (Jer 31:29) is followed by "one of the best known prophecies in the book in Jer 31:31: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah."⁷³ So Collins suggests that readers include verse 31 just as Brueggemann thinks that readers should start from verse 28. For Collins: "the most striking aspect of the new covenant is that it will be written on people's hearts. It will, in effect, be an unbreakable covenant, internalized, will be foolproof but at a price. A situation where people are programmed, so to speak, to behave in a certain way would no longer correspond to human history as we know it."⁷⁴ Von Rad also reiterates the price that comes with this new scheme: "Das Neue wird sich allein im

⁷¹. Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 289.

⁷². Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 289.

⁷³. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 345.

⁷⁴. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 345.

Bereich des Anthropologischen ereignen, nämlich in einer Wandlung des menschlichen Herzens."⁷⁵

I like this idea of 'newness' articulated by Brueggemann and Collins particularly the possibility of hope it gives to the generation of exiles for the nullification of the proverb according to which the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation. The significance of their argument is that hope and the concept of a new covenant are the new possibilities through which the present generation of exiles could nullify the existing proverb. Hope and a new covenant hereby function as raw materials for the present generation to forge a future that will be different from that of their parents. We have observed that Jeremiah cherishes the covenant tradition but recognizes that Israel broke the covenant. As a result, he thinks that the earlier Sinai process of God speaking and people listening is to be changed, and as Von Rad put it, "Jahwe wird den Vorgang des Anredens und Horens gleichsam überspringen und seinen Willen gleich in Israels Herz legen."⁷⁶ Jeremiah's concept of a new covenant, which the Lord will inscribe on the hearts of men thereby refashioning their thinking, befits my own concept of how the covenant can transform a society of Rwanda, that supposedly broke all Christian principles by engaging in the culture of violence and revenge. We will later see hope and covenant can be raw materials for the re-building of the Rwandan society.

Although Jeremiah ferociously expressed the impending disaster coming from the north, it might seem that he likewise should have assured the inhabitants

⁷⁵. Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 2, 283.

⁷⁶. Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 2, 225.

of Jerusalem that each one would be punished for their own sins and not for those of their fathers, notably those of Manasseh in the previous century. Thus, according to Jeremiah, "Individuals could save their lives during the siege of Jerusalem by deserting to the Babylonians, but he did not suggest that the Babylonian soldiers would discriminate on the basis of virtue."⁷⁷ He only expressed his confidence in the expectation of a covenant yet to come while leaving many of his immediate listeners in limbo. In view of this lack of an answer with immediate application, I would like to include in this discussion Ezekiel's response on this subject. He like Jeremiah, faced the same question but in addition gave an answer with immediate application.

Ezekiel's Appropriation of Amaziah's action of 2 Kgs 14:5-6

John Collins has recently observed that the most important contribution of all of Ezekiel to the theological tradition is his teaching on individual responsibility found in Ezek 18.⁷⁸ Joseph Blenkinsopp has also credited Ezekiel for his well known rhetorical skills and how he discussed "the soul that sins shall die."⁷⁹ Ezekiel, a priest most probably from the Zadokite family from Jerusalem was a young contemporary of Jeremiah. He was included among the elite of the land who were deported to Babylon in the company of King Jehoiachin in 597 BCE (2 Kgs 24:15).⁸⁰ He played a central role in the life of the Judeans in the Babylonian exile as the

⁷⁷. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 367.

⁷⁸. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 353.

⁷⁹. Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *Ezekiel*, Interpretation, A Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 81.

⁸⁰. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 353.

elders are depicted gathering to his house (Ezek 8:1; 14:1; 20:1). Life in exile was very difficult and a quotation from Paul Joyce's recent scholarship gives a glimpse of the situation under which Ezekiel functioned:

"The 'letter to the exiles' in Jer 29 certainly indicates an expectation that the exiled community will enjoy the liberty to "build houses and live in them; plant gardens and enjoy what they produce; take wives and have sons and daughters" (Jer 29:5-6).

And yet, even if conditions were in some respects tolerable, we must take with full seriousness the anguish and bitterness against Babylon reflected in Ps 137:9:

"Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!" The physical events of destruction and exile were devastating and the real trauma lies in its psychological and emotional impact. It is especially the theological dimension of this trauma that is crucial for understanding the work of Ezekiel. For within just a few years Judah was robbed of the main elements in her theological system: land, chosen people status, city, temple and monarchy. The events of defeat and exile at the hands of Babylonians and the theological questions that they posed are the essential key to understanding Ezekiel and his tradition."⁸¹

It is plausible that within these circumstances Ezekiel encountered the proverb: "The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on the edge" (Ezek 18:1), the same proverb that is cited in Jer 31: 29-30. According to this proverb the people of Jerusalem were not punished for their own sins, but for those of their fathers, notably those of Manasseh in the previous century.⁸² Jack Lundbom has identified a striking parallel to this proverb existing in a Neo-Assyrian prayer

⁸¹. Joyce, Paul M, *Ezekiel*, 3-4.

⁸². Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 366.

from a sick person who thinks that the disease may be an infliction for a wrong he did not commit but that someone else committed. This too shows how Israelite neighbors understood that sin could be punished to the second or third generation. The petitioner prays:

“Loosen my disgrace, the guilt of my wickedness; remove my disease; a sin I know or know not I have committed. On account of a sin of my father or my grandfather, a sin of my mother or my grandmother, on account of a sin of an elder brother or an elder sister, on account of a sin of my family. Of my kinsfolk or of my clan, the wrath of god and goddess has pressed upon me.”⁸³ We can also compare with expiation ritual where the petitioner prays for deliverance from a sin any number of possible individuals close to him may have committed, possibly one of his children or a friend:

“Make thou the angered god and angered goddess to be at peace with me. The wrath of god and goddess relax for me. The sin of wrongdoing of father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, man-servant, or maid servant, of comrade, associate, male friend, female friend, or... and I will sing thy praise.”⁸⁴

It appears then that this notion of retribution was widespread in the region just like the custom of blood vengeance. For Ezekiel, the proverb had an obvious implication just as it did whenever there was a need to explain Israel’s corporate responsibility for sin or related ideas of inherited guilt and punishment, otherwise referred to as “delayed retribution” (Exod 20:5). But Ezekiel outright refuted this old adage according to which the sins of the fathers are visited on the children

⁸³. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 461.

⁸⁴. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 21-36, 461.

to the third and the fourth generation (Exod 34:7; Num 14:18).⁸⁵ He starts by objecting to the contention that evil works on throughout the generations and proposes the counter-thesis, in a form of a direct word of Yahweh, that each individual person belongs to Yahweh, that in his life each person is related quite directly to Yahweh (Ezek 18:4).⁸⁶ Neither the virtue nor the vice of the father is laid to the son's account, according to Ezekiel. "A sinner is one who engages in idolatry or in worship at high places, defiles his neighbor's wife, and does not observe purity laws, but also one who oppresses the poor, takes interest on loans, or performs unjustly in any way."⁸⁷ Moshe Greenberg has pointed out that no person is morally an extension of the other and God views it this way:

"See, all persons are mine; the person of the father and that of the son are mine; it is the person who sins that shall die" (Ezek 18:4). This argument seems to say: Since I, as the dispenser of life, own everybody; since, therefore, I have an equal stake in fathers and sons (or since fathers and sons are alike to me), sinners appear to me not as fathers or sons but simply as faithful individuals, and as such each takes the consequences only for his own conduct. This denies that any person is morally an extension of another. God does not get to a sinner through his son as a "limb" of his father. The sinner, like everybody, is a discrete moral entity in God's sight; he is not a father or a son.⁸⁸ According to Ezekiel, therefore, unless the wicked repent, they will simply be punished, not because of the sin of the past generation but only if their sin is similar to that of the past generation. Ezekiel thus disputes the popular

⁸⁵ . Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 82.

⁸⁶ . Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 390-391.

⁸⁷ . Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 366.

⁸⁸ . Greenberg, Moshe, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB 22, 328.

thesis of a yawning gulf between act and effect, when he speaks of the individual and his life, and not of the generations or any still wider settings. This important shift is connected with Deuteronomic law which, stipulates that “the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers,” (Deut 24:16). The Deuteronomic historiographer has provided an example of the implementation of this principle by king Amaziah in 2 Kgs 14:6.

I do not give preference to Ezekiel over Jeremiah based on the precision of their respective answers to the proverb. In fact I think they exhibit no contradictions and are actually complementary. I would only like to point out that Ezekiel breaks the old Yahwistic collectivism and immediately draws the individual into the demand for personal responsibility for righteousness. So I agree with Lundbom that Ezekiel’s prophecy on retribution has more immediate application than that of Jeremiah, which is future oriented. “How modern and revolutionary is Ezekiel whose thinking appears to be conditioned by sacral orders!”⁸⁹ Considering that he was speaking to exiles, the attitude reflected in the proverb of blaming misfortune on the sins of the fathers did them no good. But as Collins has pointed out, it was better for all to take responsibility for their own fate, and to use it as an incentive to live better and more righteously.⁹⁰ This rationale is significant to my study in the following way: First of all, Jeremiah’s concept of a new covenant which the Lord will inscribe on the hearts of men thereby refashion their thinking is an imperative incentive in the transformation of Rwanda from genocidal tendencies. Hope is an important aspect of this effort in the re-building this community torn apart by mass

⁸⁹. Von Rad, *Theologie*, Vol., 2, 278.

⁹⁰. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, page 367.

atrocities. Second, Ezekiel's individual responsibility is another incentive, which the Church of Rwanda must grasp and take her responsibility for her fate but use the occasion to live a better life, a life free from genocide. However, before I show how Jeremiah and Ezekiel's concepts are complementary in rebuilding and transforming Rwanda, I need to first show evidence Rwanda's transgression of engaging in genocide.

Chapter Three

The Causes of the 1994 Genocide of Rwanda

“Spiritual death preceded physical death. Although this country was considered to be 90% Christian before the genocide happened, the church was already spiritually dead before the physical destruction of people and property. Christianity and the whole country had been built on a form of racial prejudice, indeed a shaky foundation that would not make the Church and for that matter the country to stand the test of time.”⁹¹

The encounter between European missionaries and their colonial counterparts with the African peoples most especially South of the Sahara clearly shows that it was one between a culture characterized by a harsh and consistent racial and cultural superiority versus a people considered uncultured and with no history.⁹² At the same time, it shows that this encounter could not remain neutral or

⁹¹. Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini, *Interview* in Kigali, June 15, 2010

⁹². It was in 1830 when George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel championed the argument that black African history or what he referred to, as “Africa Proper” had remained shut up from the rest of the world. He racialized Africa in the era of the trans-Atlantic slave trade by separating the land from which slaves were captured and called it “Africa Proper” from North Africa (“European Africa”) and north East Africa (“the land of the Nile”), which was according to him closely connected to Asia. In Hegel’s vision, “European Africa” was seen as a land that though “not itself a theatre of world-historical events” had “always been dependent on revolutions of a wider scope. See Hegel, G.F.W. “Introduction: Reason in History.” in *Lectures on the Philosophy of the World History*, trans. from the German edition of Johannes Hoffmeister by H.B. Nisbet, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 173-174. Similarly, the land of the Nile was seen as attached to Eurasia, “a focus” that was “destined to become the center of a great and independent culture.” In contrast was “Africa Proper” to the South. In his words: “Africa proper, as far as history goes back, has remained for all purposes of connection with the rest of the world shut up; it is the gold land compressed within itself, the land of childhood, which lying beyond the day of conscious history is enveloped in the mantle of the Night.” He went on to say that what he called the Africa Race remained in the state of innocence or the state of nature ‘in such a way that there be no such a thing like a constitution’ nor

innocent, otherwise Europeans self-assertiveness and somewhat heroism of their exploits would be deemed a failure. This chapter will focus on how the missionaries imported the Hamite Myth into Rwandan society and racialized the Tusti and Hutu differences with the aim of dominating power in the hands of one group against the others. The Hamitic hypothesis will be analyzed to trace the notions of race from the grand colonial and missionary attitudes that every sign of civilization in tropical Africa was a foreign import, an appealing claim at the time when humanity in the black skin was being devalued through capture and exchange for commercial benefits. The chapter will show how both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches played a leading role in assimilating and championing racial prejudice and how the Tutsi and Hutu church elites reproduced these racial constructs against each other in an effort to dominate power.

In my opinion, the church set a motion and practice that encouraged rivalry, conflict and revenge among the Rwandan people. One would argue that either the church was incapable or refused to address these injustices. However, due to the fact that the church enjoyed the *spoils* of this injustice during colonialism and was a revisionist at independence is evidence that it played both as agent and accomplice to racial prejudice resulting in the 1994 genocide. It appears, at first with missionaries and later on with the local clergy after independence that they wanted a successful collaboration with the state in handling church leadership ethnically

any development or culture. "The earliest reports concerning this continent," continued Hegel, "tell us precisely the same, and it has no history in the true sense of the word. We shall therefore live Africa at this point and it need not to be mentioned again; for it is an unhistorical continent with no movement or development of its own." See: Hegel, G.F.W. *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. (New York: Dover, 1956), 190.

acceptable in the eyes of political rulers, a strategy waiting to produce a disastrous situation in the absence of credible hierarchy responsible for performing a prophetic role.

For me this was the cause of the genocide because a church built on a foundation of falsehood and conflict will no doubt remain embroiled in troubles, a confirmation of archbishop Kolini's interview above in Kigali, Rwanda, June 2010. Following below is how the Hamitic myth created the so called the *settler- alien* tendencies or tendencies between Hutus who saw themselves as sons or daughters of the soil as opposed to the alien Tutsis. Later on I will show that genocide was a motivation of clearing the soil of a threatening alien Tutsi neighbor, literally and physically and according to *Radio-Television Libre de Milles Collines* (RTLM) they must be sent dead to their original home of Ethiopia.⁹³

Background to the Hamitic Hypothesis

Charles Gabriel Seligman, in his *Races of Africa* articulated his arguments that everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by the Hamites, an allegedly branch of the Caucasian race. He formulated his thesis thus:

⁹³. Radio-Television Libre de Mille Collines was launched in April 1993 as one of the main propaganda machines used to exploit ethnic feelings after the *Inkontanyi* or Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF); Tutsi dominated rebels invaded Rwanda from Uganda in 1990. It was dominated by Hutu- hard-liners who adopted the policy of telling lies, inciting animosity and murder. I was able to listen to some of the recorded voices that were inciting the Hutu community to identify Tutsis and their sympathizers and to send them dead to 'their original home of Ethiopia'.

“Apart from relatively late Semitic influence... the civilizations of Africa are the civilizations of the Hamites, its history the record of these peoples and their interaction with the two other African stocks, the Negro and the Bushman, whether this influence was exerted by highly civilized Egyptians or by such wider pastoralists as are represented at the present day by the Beja and Somali... These Pastoral Hamites entered Africa –or if the African hypothesis of their origin be maintained, entered Negroland in a long succession of waves, of which the earliest may have been the end of the pluvial period, were better armed as well as more intelligent than the dark agricultural Negroes.”⁹⁴

Although the race doctrines about Africa were evident in Europe during the period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, these doctrines grew in complexity in the periods that followed, that period of “discovery” and colonial conquest. The more Europeans got to know about Africa, the less credible became the notion of the Sahara as a great civilization barrier, and the more they were confronted with, and had to explain the growing evidence of organized life on the continent before the encounter with Europe. Every sign of “progress” on the Dark Continent was taken to as evidence of a civilizing influence of an outsider race. For instance in 1859 when John Hanning Speke was on an expedition to discover the source of the Nile, he travelled through Kenya and northern Tanzania, entered Uganda through the southwest Karagwe route. His intent was to enter the kingdom of Buganda, currently in central Uganda where River Nile starts but he also later on visited the

⁹⁴. Seligman, Charles Gabriel, *Races of Africa*, 4th Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 65-100.

kingdom of Bunyoro in north west of Buganda. After he witnessed the well-organized court systems in both kingdoms had this to say:

“The governments in these kingdoms are in the hands of foreigners-semi-Shem-Hamitic of Ethiopia, who had invaded and taken possession of them, leaving agricultural aborigines to till the ground, whilst the juniors members of the usurping clans herded cattle-just as the Abyssinians or as the Gallas (Ethiopians) have shown them. There a pastoral clan from the Asiatic side took the government of Abyssinia from its people and have ruled over them ever since, changing, by intermarriage with the Africans, the texture of their hair and color to a certain extent, but still maintaining a high stamp of Asiatic feature, of which a market characteristic is bridged instead of bridgeless nose.”⁹⁵ This race of civilizers, it was said, was Caucasian and black without being Negroid in race.

Thus were born the Hamites of Africa, separated from the Bantu, so called real Africans.⁹⁶ Although I will later on discuss how this ‘civilizing influence’ became a wedge in dividing the Rwandan society after the German and Belgian colonizers reincarnated the Hamitic myth, I think it is relevant to first give a highlight on what I would like to refer to as a *twisted* interpretation of the narrative concerning Noah and his sons in Gen 9:18-27. It is this chapter from which the Hamitic Hypothesis developed; therefore, discussing it is relevant to the scope of this dissertation namely that if the church must refrain from perpetuating division, conflict and revenge, then it must first refrain from tendencies that make a Biblical text to yield a

⁹⁵. Speke, John Hanning, *The Discovering of the Source of the Nile*. (London: White Star Publishers 2006), 309-310.

⁹⁶. Mamdani, Mahmood, *When Victims become Killers*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 79.

distorted meaning and rather than use a Biblical text to encourage ethical behavior instead rationalize the distorted meaning and justify the unethical.

Noah and his sons in Gen 9:18-27

וַיְהִי בִּנְיַת הַיָּצְאִים מִקְהֶתֶבָה שֵׁם וְחָם וְיָפֶת וְחָם הוּא אֲבִי כְנָעַן
שְׁלֹשָׁה אֱלֹהֵי בִּנְיָן וּמֵאֵלֶּה נִפְצָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ
וְיִשְׁכַּר וַיִּתְּגַל בְּתוֹךְ אֱהֱלֹהֵי־שֵׁת מִקְהֶתֶבָה²¹ וַיִּחַל נָתַן אִישׁ הָאָדָמָה וַיִּטֶּע כֶּרֶם
וַיִּרְאֵהוּ חָם אֲבִי כְנָעַן אֶת עֶרְוַת אָבִיו וַיַּגֵּד לְשִׁמְעֹנִיו בְּחוּץ
וַיִּכְסֹּה אֶת עֶרְוַת וִיקַח שֵׁם וַיַּפֵּת אֶת־הַשְׂמֵלָה וַיִּשְׁלִמוּ עַל־שִׁכְמָם שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיִּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי־נָתַן
אֲבִיהֶם וּפְנֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵי־נָתַן וְעֶרְוַת אֲבִיהֶם לֹא רָאוּ
וַיִּקַּח נָתַן מִיָּינוּ וַיִּדַּע אֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה־לּוֹ בְּנוֹ הַקָּטָן
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲרוּרֹךְ כְּנָעַן עֶבֶד עֲבָדִים יִהְיֶה לְאֹחִיו
אָמֵן בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹנִי
יָפֶת אֱלֹהִים לְיָפֶת וַיִּשְׁכֵּן בְּאַחֲרֵי־שֵׁם וַיְהִי כְנָעַן עֶבֶד לְמוֹנִי
(Gen 9:18-27)

How surprising that the above original Hebrew Biblical text does not mention race nor allude to color of skin. Putting this observation aside, the genealogy of the Hamite Myth and the confusion it has created in Rwanda goes deeper than both the trans-Atlantic slavery and the colonial periods. Its raw material from which it was manufactured is the Hamitic Hypothesis that is dated back to the Judaic and Christian myths of biblical and medieval vintage connected to the above Hebrew text.⁹⁷ Edith R. Sanders has argued that a closer examination of the Hamitic Hypothesis brings to light the Hamitic theory in which the Hamites are

⁹⁷. Mamdani, *When Victims become Killers*, 80.

believed to be Negroes. According to Sanders, the hypothesis is symptomatic of the nature of race relations, that it has changed its content if not its nomenclature through time, and that it has become a problem to epistemology.⁹⁸

Thomas F. Gosset observed that one of the most famous examples of misrepresentation concerning Ham in Gen 9:18-27 is found in the Babylonian Talmud from the second century to the sixth century A.D. He notes that though nothing in Genesis is said about the descendants of either Ham or Canaan being Negroes, the Babylonian Talmud says that Ham's descendants were cursed to be black.⁹⁹ Max Seligson agrees by saying that, "Ham is represented by the Talmudists as one of the three who had intercourse with their wives in the Ark, being punished therefore in that his descendants, the Ethiopians are black."¹⁰⁰ Cf. Aggadah¹⁰¹, which says that Ham was also punished in that his descendants, the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, were taken captive and led into exile with their buttocks uncovered, based on Isaiah 20:4, and Genesis Rabbah 36:6.¹⁰²

In Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedunu¹⁰³, Rabbi Yohanan contends that Ham, the progenitor of the Canaanites was one of the three beings that indulged in

⁹⁸. Sanders, Edith R, "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective," *Journal of African History*, Vol.10, No.4 (1969), 521-522.

⁹⁹. Gossett, T.F, *Race-The History of an Idea in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997),5.

¹⁰⁰. Seligson, Max. 1964.Ham in Rabbinical Literature. Page 186 in Vol. 7 of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. Edited by Isidore Singer. (Jerusalem: KTA, 1964).

¹⁰¹. Aggadah is a name given to those sections of the Talmud and Midrash containing homiletic expositions of the Bible, stories, legends, folklore, anecdotes, or maxims. In contradiction to halakhah or those parts concerned with legal matters.

¹⁰². Rothkoff, Aaron. 2007. In the Aggadah. Page 290 in Vol. 8 of *The Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Fred Skolnik. (New York: Thomson, 2007).

¹⁰³. This is the complete midrashic text on the Pentateuch. The name was assigned arbitrarily to this homiletical compilation and is found in a number of manuscripts

intercourse while in the Ark. The others were dog and a raven... Ham was afflicted with a dark skin. In the same manuscript Rabbi Shalum said that because Ham had glanced at his naked father, his eyes became red, and because he related what he had seen to others with his mouth, his lips became twisted. His hair became singled because he ignored his father's condition. He would also be naked. Rabbi Judah added that Canaan was born on the Ark and because God had blessed Noah and his sons the curse could not prevail where there was a blessing, so it went to Canaan. In support of this view Rabbi Nehemiah held that it was actually Canaan who discovered Noah's nakedness and informed his father, Ham, about it. Hence the curse was directed against Canaan who was responsible for the committed sin and his descendants were cursed into slavery.¹⁰⁴ Both Rabbi Judah and Rabi Nehemiah seem to suggest that the time Noah spent in the Ark was long enough for Canaan to be born there and to grow into a person who could tell the difference between who was naked and who was not.

This notion of Ham as a sinful man persisted in the Christian medieval period and was mainly furnished by rabbinical elaborations on the Genesis story that Ham had emasculated Noah, who cursed him thus: Now I cannot beget the fourth son whose children I would have ordered to serve you and your brothers. Therefore it must be Canaan, your first born, whom they enslave. And since you have disabled

and in several printed editions such as one called Constantinople 1522, Venice 1562 and Matua 1562. The first name of Tanhuma, was adopted from the name of Tanhuma bar Abba, one of the most prolific aggadists in Jewish literature who lived in the fourth century C.E. The second half of the title, Yelammedenu is part of a formula, *yelammedenu rabbenu*, "may our master teach us" which is frequently repeated in the Midrash.

¹⁰⁴. See Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*. (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1996), 63-71.

me... doing ugly things in blackness of the night, Canaan's children shall be born ugly and black! Moreover, because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness, your grandchildren's hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red; again because your lips jested at my misfortune, theirs shall swell; and because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked, and their male members shall be shamefully elongated. Men of this race are called Negroes; their forefather Canaan commanded them to love theft and fornication, to be banded together in hatred of their masters and never to tell the truth.¹⁰⁵

I must say, however, that modern Jewish scholars have a different take on this text and have dismissed Talmudic theories that related the descendants of Ham to East Africa or Southern Arabia. Max Wurmbrand has argued for a possible *crude* link between "Ham the father of" in verses 18b and 22 to verses 18-19 and 20ff in which Noah's sons are Shem, Japheth and Canaan. The sons of Ham are Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan who become the progenitors of numerous nations (Gen 10:6-20). According to Wurmbrand, "the presence of Canaan and of South Arabian tribes (Sheba, Dedan) in this genealogy is surprising, since by linguistic criteria these peoples are Semitic. To overcome this discrepancy between linguistic and racial characteristics, it has been suggested that Cush is to be identified with the Kassites, who ruled Babylonia in the second millennium B.C.E., rather than Nubia [Sudan]; that Mizraim might be Muzri, in southeast Cappadocia instead of Egypt;

¹⁰⁵. Roberts, Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths-The Book of Genesis*. (New York: Doubleday, 1964). 121.

and that in general the nations mentioned in the genealogy are to be sought in Asia Minor rather than Eastern Africa or Southern Arabia.”¹⁰⁶

David Sperling has supported all Wurmbrand’s views and added that “as home of the most important nation descended from Ham, Egypt is poetically called “Ham” in one Psalm whose date is controversial (Ps 78:51), and “the land of Ham” in the late psalms (Ps 105:23; 27; 106:22; cf Genesis Apocryphon, 19:13). Both M. Wurmbrand and D. Sperling agree that Egypt is apparently the nucleus of the Hamite genealogy, the others having been added because of geographical proximity or political ties.¹⁰⁷ Both scholars have refrained from possible insinuations leaning toward the medieval midrashic stance, which claimed that Ham’s descendants are Egyptians, Cushites and Ethiopians or Abyssinians.

E.A Speiser has also observed that if one takes a closer at all the references to the sons of Noah in Gen 5:32, 6:10, 7:13, 9:18 and 10:1, the Hebrew texts do not refer to racial differences among the ancestors of mankind. He adds that the explicit consistent order of Noah’s sons, that is, Shem-Ham-Japheth indicates their respective order of age and Ham is the second of the three and that one is not prepared for a notation in v.24 that Ham was the youngest. At most, Ham should be called “the younger” and the Hebrew language here cannot be forced to yield this meaning. According to Speiser this text could be deriving from a different tradition in which either Ham or Canaan was cited as the third son of Noah thereby agreeing with Wurmbrand and Sperling. “The statement refers Noah’s youngest son but

¹⁰⁶ . Max Wurmbrand .1978. HAM. Page 1216 in vol.7 of *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Cecil Roth. Jerusalem: Keter.1978.

¹⁰⁷ . Max Wurmbrand & David Sperling. 2007. HAM. Page 290 in vol.8 of *Encyclopedia Judaica*. Edited by Fred Skolnik. New York: 2007.

Ham's; and on the evidence of Gen 10:6, that individual was Canaan. This view is expressed already in the commentary of Ibn Ezra (twelfth century)...Ham himself, then, would be the offended party, and his son Canaan the perpetrator of some base deed, the details of which were either accidentally lost or deliberately oppressed. The omission led in turn to the disturbed text that is before us."¹⁰⁸

In my opinion, myths hardly point to real historical bearings but if there is a social discourse and a myth has become part of it, its impact in that context need not be ignored. A myth can be believed, accepted and can become *useful* in the rationalization of an economic fact of life. Graves and Patai have put it thus: "The Biblical myth is told to justify Hebrew enslavement of Canaanites-Canaan was *Chnas* for Phoenicians, and *Agenor* for Greeks. In one midrashic passage, sodomy has been added to Ham's crimes. A long list of Canaanite sexual offences is contained in Lev 18; and King Rehoboam's subjects are reproached in 1 Kgs 14:24 for practicing 'all the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the Children of Israel.' The Sexual modesty of Shem's Hebrews is emphasized in this Midrash, and God's blessings extended to all sons of Japheth who have now joined them."¹⁰⁹ Scholars like Graves and Patai who studied Hebrew myths of Genesis claim that these oral traditions grew out of the need of Israelites to rationalize their subjugation of Canaan, a historical fact validated by Noah's curse. Speiser thinks that Israelites must have put these subjugation theories together at the turn of the twelfth century B.C., when they were struggling against the entrenched Canaanites

¹⁰⁸ . Speiser, E. A, *Genesis*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 62.

¹⁰⁹ . See R. Graves, and R. Patai, *Hebrew Myths*. (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 122.

at the same time that the recently arrived Philistines were trying to consolidate their hold on the costal strip.¹¹⁰

In a different age and context of the sixteenth-century the myth was turned into a raw material for the Atlantic slave trade. Leo Africanus, the great North African traveler and one time protégé of Pope Leo X, wrote and identified Negro Africans as having descended from Ham. Edith Sanders has noted that Leon's translator; the English man John Pory "followed the text with his own commentary in which he stressed the *punishment* suffered by Ham's descendants, thus reinforcing the myth in modern times."¹¹¹ It appears that the Biblical phrase "a servant of servants shall he be," allowed the exploitation of the Negro for economic gains without disturbing any Christian sensibilities. Neither individual nor collective guilt was to be borne for the state of the world created by the Almighty! Graves and Patai have observed, "that Negroes are doomed to serve men of lighter color was a view gratefully borrowed by Christians in the Middle Ages; a severe shortage of cheap manual labor caused by plague made the institution of slavery attractive."¹¹² Thus slavery and all the impact it would have on the affected peoples were justified by the Hamite myth in the sixteenth century. But then how come that during the European colonial and missionary enterprise, both colonialists and missionaries came to believe that the *accursed* Hamites were a 'civilizing agent'? How could a people who inherited the corruption of their ancestor, Ham, not be able to dispense corruption but instead became dispensers of civilization? What follows below are

¹¹⁰ . Speiser, *Genesis*, 62-63.

¹¹¹. Sanders, *The Hamitic Hypothesis*, 522-523.

¹¹² . Graves, and Patai, *Hebrew Myths*, 122.

the twists and turns of the Hamite myth and how this twist set a center stage for violence in Rwanda.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the myth that the Negro was the accursed descendant of Ham had been twisted around, and the force behind this twist was Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. Because Napoleon, shared a passion of science and antiquities with the intellectuals of the Enlightenment, he invited archeologists and other scientists to join him on the Egyptian expedition. The immediate impact of the discoveries that this team made was to revolutionize Europe's view of Africans and to lay a basis for a twist of the myth. Members of Napoleon's team of scientists made a revolutionary discovery that the beginnings of Western civilization were earlier than the civilization of Romans and the Greeks, after mysterious monuments, evidences of the beginnings of science, art, and well-preserved mummies were uncovered in Egypt. Attention was drawn to the population that lived among these ancient splendors and was presumably descended from the people who had created them. It was a well-mixed population; such as it was at the present time, with physical types running from light to black and with many physiognomical variations. Vivant Denon, a writer from Napoleon's expedition described the pre-dominant physical features of Egyptians: "a broad and flat nose, very short, a large flattened mouth...thick lips, etc."¹¹³

Apparently, the view that Egyptians were 'Negroid' and highly civilized had existed before the arrival of Napoleon's expedition team to Egypt. Count Volney, also a French man, had travelled to the Middle East and spent four years in Egypt and

¹¹³ . Denon, Vivant, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*. (London: 1803), cited in Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis," p.525.

Syria. He wrote: "How are we astonished...when we reflect that the race of Negroes, at present our slaves, and the object of our contempt, we owe our arts, sciences, and...when we recollect that, in the midst of these nations, who call themselves the friends of liberty and humanity, the most barbarous of slaveries is justified; and that is even a problem whether the understandings of the negroes be of the same species with that of white men!"¹¹⁴

In spite the deserved respect that Volney had observed and put forward, his opinions on the subject were not accepted. Nevertheless, the Egyptian expedition made it impossible to hide that seeming paradox of a population of Negroids who were, once upon a time, originators of the oldest civilization of the West. The conflicting ideologies that existed in the West made it impossible for the various proponents of these ideologies to deal with the notion as it stood. Such a notion upset the main existing tenets; it could not be internalized by those individuals on one side who were convinced of the innate inferiority of the Negro and on the other those who adhered to the Biblical explanation of the origin of races. To the latter such an idea was blasphemous, as Noah's curse condemned the Hamites to misery and precluded high original achievement.¹¹⁵

The answer to this paradox became a very simple one: it was to twist the curse of Noah and claim that the Hamites including the Egyptians were actually Caucasians under a black skin. Rather than Negroes, Hamites were seen as other than Negroes, those who civilized the Negroes and were in turn corrupted by the

¹¹⁴. Volney, Constantine Francois, *Travels through Syria and Egypt in 1783, 1784, 1785*. (New York: John Tiebout, 1798), 83.

¹¹⁵. Sander, *The Hamitic Hypothesis*, 525.

Negroes. In this scheme of things, the ancient Egyptians were considered Hamitic, not Negroid, as were the Cushites [Nubians] and the Ethiopians who were preferably called Abyssinian, a name less evocative of blackness than was Ethiopia.¹¹⁶

The architect of the above view was Comte de Gobineau, the respectable nineteenth century reactionary who later came to be considered the father of European racism.¹¹⁷ He explained that three races represented by the sons of Noah, that is Shem, Ham and Japheth had all originated from Central Asia and set out to seek their fortunes- all rather like the Three Little Piglets. The Hamites headed south and according to him were the genius behind ancient Egypt and behind the Phoenicians. But after founding some civilizations and attempting to keep their blood pure, they had become hopelessly mongrelized by the native and inferior blacks. The Semites, who also got polluted in the course of time, partly from their contact with blacks, but mostly from contact with “mulato” Hamites. Only Aryans, the Japhites, had stayed in the north and retained their purity. According to Comte, the sons of Noah were the predecessors of the three main races of humanity namely, the Europeans who were begotten from Japheth, the Semites from Shem, and the Hamites from Ham. No longer Hamites, but a pre-Hamitic species were said to have corrupted the Hamites, the Negroid Africans were beyond the pale of

¹¹⁶. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 83.

¹¹⁷ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 82-83.

humanity.¹¹⁸ Neither Comte nor any other labored to mention the origin of the so called 'pre-Hamite species, sometimes referred to as the Bantu Negroes.

Comte's view that Egyptians were Caucasians under a black skin got somewhat reconciled to the Genesis story. It was recalled that Noah had, after all, cursed Canaan, son of Ham, but not Ham or his other sons, Cush the Ethiopian, Mizraim the Egyptian, and Put. The Egyptians, it was remembered were born of Mizraim, a different son of Ham. So the Egyptians were salvaged, unscathed, black but not Negroid, and therefore not cursed and capable of high civilization.¹¹⁹ Theologically, this view also became accepted as attested in theological literature of the time. For instance, *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, published in 1846 by John Kitto, D.D., F.S.A., has a long article under the name *Ham*. It stressed that the curse of Noah is directed against Canaan. The general opinion is that all southern nations derive from Ham. However, the article admits difficulties in tracing the history of the most important Hamitic nations-the Cushites, the Phoenicians and the Egyptians due to their great intermixture with foreign peoples. So we can now see that this period is faced with a new Hamitic myth, this time with a Caucasoid protagonist. During the same time, there are scientific bases of this new Hamitic myth being devised and, allegedly, substantiated. Several scholars such as Dr Morton, assisted in various ways by Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, collected, measured, interpreted and described the human crania and their comparative results made them conclude

¹¹⁸. For Comte de Gobineau's thesis see Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical civilization*, Vol. 1: *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece*, 1785-1985 (New York: Vintage, 1991), 339,343,353-355.

¹¹⁹. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 83.

that the Egyptian osteological formation was Caucasian, and that it was a race indigenous to the Nile Valley.¹²⁰

The dominance and influence of Comte's thinking is reflected in the works of Professor Charles Gabriel Seligman, *Races of Africa*, first published in 1930, and then reprinted, basically without revision, in several editions until 1966. Like Comte, Seligman pronounced the Hamites "Europeans" for they belonged to the same great branch of mankind as the whites and he opined that they widely diffused in Africa spreading civilization to the rest of the other two African stocks, the Negro and the Bushmen explaining how Egyptian degeneration populated the rest of Africa. The whole point here was to stress that Hamitic diffusion spread civilization to the Negro and Bushmen.¹²¹ This notion meant that races were given a hierarchy in form

¹²⁰ . Sanders, *The Hamitic Hypothesis*, 527.

¹²¹ . Seligman, *Races of Africa*, 61. He described "the mechanism" by which the "incoming Hamites" or what he described as "pastoral Europeans" arrived, better armed as well as quicker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes," leading to "the origin of the Negro-Hamitic people": He described it thus: The mechanism of the origin of the Negro-Hamitic peoples will be understood when it is realized that the incoming Hamites were pastoral Europeans, arriving wave after wave, better armed than the dark agricultural Negroes, for it must be remembered that there was no Bronze Age in Africa, and we may believe that the Negro, who is now an excellent Iron worker, learnt this art from the Hamite. Diagrammatically, the process can be explained as follows. At first the Hamites, or their aristocracy, would endeavor to marry Hamitic women, but it cannot have been long before a series of peoples combining Negro and Hamitic blood arose; these superior to the pure Negro, would be regarded with disdain by the next coming wave of Hamites and be pushed further in land to play the part of an incoming aristocracy vis-à-vis the Negroes on whom they impinged. And this process was repeated with minor modifications over a long period of time, the pastoralists always asserting their superiority over the agriculturalists, who constantly tended to leave their own mode of life in favor of pastoralists or at least to combine it with the latter. The end result of one series of such combination is to be seen in the Zulu, of another in the Ganda, while an even more striking result is offered by the symbiosis, to use a biological term, the Huma of Ankole and the Iru. The Huma, a tall, cattle-owning aristocracy, with narrow noses and faces, so unlike the Negro (they always have Negro hair) that Johnston

of a Caucasian ladder and the top continued to be occupied by the Teutonic Anglo-Saxons. But its bottom rungs, previously occupied by the Slavs, were now stretched to the African Hamites. Just as Egyptians were devalued in the hierarchy of Caucasians-put at its lower rung as Hamites, whites in black skin-they were rejoined to Africa and acclaimed, as it were, the front line of the Hamites marching through the length and breadth of the African continent, spreading civilization.

It appears that these contradictions did not matter, not so long as the Hypothesis could now be put in another new context of colonialism by explaining away the growing evidence of civilization within the Dark Continent as European adventures took to exploring it during the late nineteenth century. For Europeans, Hamites were Caucasoid and were now confirmed as the great "civilizers" of Africa. The travelers found a variety of physical types in Africa, and their ethnocentrism made them value those who looked more like themselves. These were declared to be Hamitic, or of Hamitic descent, and endowed with the myth of superior achievements and considerable beneficial influence on their Negro brothers.

It was in this regard that John Hanning Speke (see above), who was seminal to this Hamitic Hypothesis wrote: I profess to describe naked Africa-Africa in those places where it has not received the slightest impulse, whether for good or evil, from European civilization. If the picture be a dark one, we should when contemplating the sons of Noah try and carry our mind back to that time when our poor elder

when he first saw them thought they were Egyptian soldiers left behind by Emin Pasha, live in the country of the shorter, broader- faced Negro Iru; the latter normally provide them with grain, and no doubt in the past there has been intermarriage (witness the spiraled hair of even the Huma aristocracy), though at the present time each group is said to keep itself. Seligman, *Races of Africa*, pp.100-101.

brother Ham was cursed by his father, and condemned to be a slave of both Shem and Japheth; for as they were then, so they appear now-a strikingly existing proof of the Holy Scriptures."¹²² Upon the discovery of the Buganda kingdom with its complex political organization, Speke attributed what he termed as its 'barbaric civilization' to a nomadic pastoralist race related to the Hamitic Galla from Ethiopia.¹²³ He claimed that the Tutsi (Watutsi in Swahili) were none other than

¹²². Speke, *Journal for the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 9.

¹²³. This is Speke's elaborate speculation on the subject: The reader has by now had my experience of several of the minor states, and has presently to be introduced to Uganda, the most powerful state in the ancient but divided kingdom of Kitara. I shall have to record a residence of considerable duration at the court there; and, before entering on it, I propose to state my theory of the ethnology of that part of Africa inhabited by the people collectively styled Wahuma, otherwise Gallas of Abyssinians. My theory is founded on the traditions of several nations, as checked by my own observation of what I saw when passing through them. It appears impossible to believe, judging from the physical appearance of the Wahuma, that they can be of any other race than the semi-Hamitic of Ethiopia.

In these countries the government is in the hands of foreigners, who had invaded and taken possession of them, leaving the agricultural aborigines to till the ground, while the junior members of the usurping clans herded cattle-just as in Abyssinia, or whatever the Abyssinians or Gallas have shown themselves. There are pastoral clan from the Asiatic side took the government of Abyssinia from its people and have ruled over them ever since, changing, by intermarriage, with the Africans, the mixture of their hair and color to a certain extent, but still maintaining a high stamp of Asiatic feature, of which a marked characteristic is a bridged instead of a bridged nose.

Speke continued to speculate thus: It may be assumed that there once existed a foreign but compact government in Abyssinia, which, becoming great and powerful, sent out armies on all sides of it, especially to the south, south-east, and west, slave hunting and devastating wherever they went, and in process of time becoming too great for one ruler to control. Junior members of the royal family then, pushing their fortunes, dismembered themselves from the parent stock, created separate governments, and, for reasons, which cannot be traced, changed their names. In this manner we may suppose that the Gallas separated from Abyssinians, and located themselves to the south of their native land.

How or when the Wahuma changed into Watutsi no one is able to explain; but, again deducing the past from the present, we cannot help suspecting that, in the same way that this change has taken place, the name Galla may have changed from Habshi, and Wahuma from Gallas...The confusion for [us] travelers is increased by

Wahuma and that judging from their physical appearance can be of any other race than the semi-Shem-Hamitic of Ethiopia. Speke was the first one to categorize the Tutsi of Rwanda as one of the many Hamitic groups.

Speke's writing was central in the second incarnating the Hamitic myth. While he said that he depended on traditions of several nations as he passed through them to get the information he wrote down, he also admitted that travelers like him were faced with the confusion of how the Wahuma had a habit of conforming to the regulations of the countries they adopted. Nonetheless, he went ahead and made a conclusion based on the physical appearance that they have a Shem-Hamitic origin. In my opinion his hypothesis of conquest that the 'carriers of superior civilization', the Hamitic Galla of Southern Ethiopia were ancestors of the Tutsi was hazardous, fully speculative without a shred of evidence. How could he depend on historiographical premises in an orally transmitted history? However, considering that his writing came out at the onset of the colonial and missionary enterprises in East Africa, and had wide readership¹²⁴ would be of utmost significance for several reasons. First of all, by designating Hamites as bearers of civilization to the Negroes he was maintaining the image of the Negro as an inferior being, a notion pointed to the alleged fact that development could come to him through the mediation of the Caucasian [white] race. In other words, it was a type of

the habits...of conforming to the regulations of the different countries they adopt...We are thus left only the one very distinguished mark, the physical appearance of this remarkable race, partaking even more of the phlegmatic nature of the Shemetic father than the nervous boisterous temperament of the Hamitic mother, as a certain clue to their Shem-Hamitic origin. Speke, *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*, 309-310, 314-315.

¹²⁴. See: Grant, J. A, Stanley's Verification of Speke's Discoveries. *Journal of the American Geographical Society of New York*, Vol.7 (1875), 311-323.

writing that conditioned deeply and durably the views and attitudes of the Europeans regarding the Rwandese social groups they were dealing with. Second, by attributing what he termed 'barbaric civilization' of the agricultural Negroes and Bushmen to foreign-pastoralist invaders or the Abyssinian Hamites, he was not only reincarnating the Hamitic myth but he was also forecasting a sort of 'unquestionable scientific canon' that would actually govern the decisions at first made by the German and later by the Belgian colonial authorities. I will later on assess the role of the church in the implementation of the colonial policy of indirect rule that created frustration, rivalry, anger and conflict. Third, the designation "*foreign bearers of civilization from Ethiopia/Abyssinia*" would make an impact on the natives themselves. It would create a scenario that the Tutsi were Hamites [something they enjoyed very much for expediency], an alien race hence none indigenous and different from the Hutu, who would be constructed as indigenous Bantu. As we shall later on see, this fact was seized by the extremist Hutus who claimed that genocide was about cleansing the land from alien Tutsi invaders and they would be sent dead to their original home in Ethiopia.¹²⁵ The Hamite stereotype and other descriptive terms such as 'they are intelligent', 'they are good looking', 'they are quick witted with the spear and bow and naturally endowed to rule' inflated the Tutsi cultural ego inordinately and crushed Hutu feelings until they coalesced into an aggressively resentful inferiority complex. So if we put together all these considerations and add to them the political and administrative decisions made by the church and colonial

¹²⁵. Mugesera, L, Inflammatory Speech: (November, 1992), cited in Tharcisse Gatwa, "*The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises, 1900-1994* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 28.

administrations, we can see that either expediency or absent-mindedness prevalent during the colonial and post independent Rwanda was a very dangerous time bomb awaiting to explode in the genocide of 1994.

So far, I have argued that Comte de Gobineau's theory made Hamites a branch of Caucasians. This view was reconciled with the Hamitic myth that was reinvented by John Hanning Speke thus making the Tutsi of Rwanda one of the many Hamitic groups as he argued that they descended from the Ethiopian Galla Hamites. What follows next is to show how the Church through colonialism made the Tutsi to become a *racialized* minority not just through an ideology but rather through a set of institutional reforms that the ideology inspired, in which it was embedded, and which eventually reproduced it.

The role of the Church in racializing Tutsi and Hutu Differences

The early development of Christianity in Rwanda was determined by three factors namely, the socio- cultural, political and religious contexts of Europe which influenced the missionaries; the influence of Cardinal Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers Order and Monsignor Leon Classe, the Apostolic Vicar of Rwanda from 1907 to 1945 and finally, the views of the missionaries about the people of Rwanda.¹²⁶ The significance attached to the descriptive definitions such as Hutu Tutsi is very central to the formation of ethnic identity of Rwanda. Neither the sources of oral traditions as John Speke claimed nor the various official and private

¹²⁶. Gatwa, Tharcisse, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 62.

literature on which most of the ethnologists relied, nor any other source is able to clarify the process that led to the present day mixture of the population or the formation of the ethnic group. What is clear though is that before missionaries and colonialists arrived neither group saw its identity as a politically significant fact. Tharcisse Gatwa has also observed that, " the Hamite concept was unknown to the people of Rwanda."¹²⁷ I also want to recognize that the movement of people is always a natural process and it is reasonable that the Tutsi may have emigrated from elsewhere. But that is where we should stop otherwise suggesting that they came with a superiority is to imply another motive.

The evangelization of Rwanda was a grand design made by Cardinal Lavigerie who had left his See in Nancy, France and decided to evangelize north Africa whose glorious Christianity had been extinguished by the Muslim conquests during the 7th century. After reading the reports from the explorers who had been to the African interior, he was distressed by the misery of the black people enslaved by traders of human beings. He then decided on the idea for the foundation of a Christian kingdom in the heart of Africa. However, the cardinal had an oversimplified view of Africans made from the analysis of European explorers especially that Africans have no idea about God. In 1879, the cardinal summarized his views thus: "According to the accounts of travelers, it is doubtful that the Negroes of the interior have any ideas on the after life and the immortality of the soul. In all cases, they appear to have no religion, but some gross superstitions,

¹²⁷. Gatwa, Tharcisse, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*. (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 71.

without any form of culture, which resemble sorcery. The idea of God is so vague in them that some explorers have said that they have none.”¹²⁸

Later on, the Cardinal change his opinion over time after he read a different report from Father Livinhac who evangelized Uganda and wrote the following: “The Baganda know God, the demons and the great laws of nature. These poor people are surely less evil than the Romans and Muslims’. Then the Cardinal confessed his misconceptions and adjusted his attitude thus: “We know very well and affirm emphatically, not only that the African people are extraordinarily receptive to spiritual, religious and moral culture, whatever people say.”¹²⁹ From Cardinal Lavigerie’s conceptions and misconceptions about black Africa, at least one gets to learn how missionaries exploited and abused the religious factor. It also brings to mind how the First Vatican Council appealed for the alleviation of the malediction weighing on the shoulders of the Hamites inhabiting the Nigrity.

If the White Fathers that first came to Rwanda in 1900 for missionary work got their recommendations from Cardinal Lavigerie then he must have emphasized the following two facts. First, he must have instructed them to occupy Rwandan territory in a kind of competition, something Gatwa that has referred to as the White Father’s *Coup for the implantation of Christianity*.¹³⁰ They arrived in Rwanda¹³¹ via

¹²⁸ . Lavigerie, C., Cardinal, cited in Gatwa, “*The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*,” 74.

¹²⁹. Van der Meersch, cited in Gatwa, “*The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*,” 75.

¹³⁰. Gatwa, Tharcisse, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 61.

¹³¹. It is not right to assume that 1900 Rwanda existed and we know it today. When the first German officer, Dr Kandt arrived in 1898, king Kigeli IV, the most prominent of the monarchs in the region had died.

Uganda led by Monsignor Hirth, and became impressed by how the country was densely populated and without other religious influence. They then established a plan of occupying the territory before the arrival of the Protestants and the Muslims.

Their work was facilitated by Dr Richard Kandt, a German colonial resident (later to be the first German governor of Rwanda) who had occupied the territory from 1898¹³². Dr Kandt saw in the development of Christianity a factor for promoting pacification as well as an ingredient for development and bulwark against Islam.¹³³ In a short time, the Catholic missionaries set up a strategy and covered the following heavily populated areas: Save, Bugoyi, Kinyaga and Kabgayi respectively in 1900, 1901, 1903, 1905. The first Protestant missionaries from the Bethel Mission established themselves in Zinga in the East and Kirinda in the west in 1907, Rubengera in 1909, Kiteme on Idjwi Island (lake Kivu) in 1910 and Remera-Rukoma in the center in 1912. This missionary scramble for Rwanda suggests that the missionaries quickly familiarized themselves with the historical, cultural, ritual and political importance of the place and to begin to influence the chiefs and gradually modify the symbols of cultural and regional diversity. The White Father's *coup* in the implantation of Christianity in Rwanda would be an advantage for the Roman Catholic Church to dominate during the colonial era.¹³⁴

Cardinal Lavigerie's second recommendation must have been to first convert the ruling class who would then bring in the masses. In Rwanda's situation, this

¹³² . Catherine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression, Citizenship and Ethnicity in Rwanda 1860-1960*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 53.

¹³³. Gatwa, Tharcisse, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*. (Wipf & Stock: Oregon, 2005), 57-58.

¹³⁴. Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*, 61.

strategy would build up a social elite that would be the pride of western civilization. The man who is known for having imprinted his remark on this strategy is Msgr. Leon Classe. He arrived as an ordinary priest in Rwanda in 1901. He became Vicar Delegate in 1907, did his work so well at the pleasure of his superiors in France who promoted him to become Bishop and head of the Roman Catholic Church of Rwanda from 1922 until 1945. A very industrious man, Classe applied with military rigor the instructions from his superiors and was keen at influencing decision making bodies. In his role as the Bishop, he campaigned for the return of Gisaka district to Belgium from the British Empire and it was reintegrated in Rwanda in 1924. He participated in other contentious decisions including the overthrow of King Musinga of Rwanda whom he considered an obstacle to the evangelization process. The king was exiled and died in Congo. His close links with the colonial authorities were marked by the inclusion in the colonial administration report of many sections containing reports provided by him as was for Pastors E. Durand of Societe belge des missions protestantes au Congo (SBMPC) and Monnier (Adventist) of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).¹³⁵

In his early stages of his missionary career, Msgr Classe was already very blunt in support of the Hamitic myth. He wrote in 1902 that, "the Tutsi are great men, with fine and regular traits, with something of the Aryan and Semitic type."¹³⁶ But he was not the only missionary who had this view for instance, for Father

¹³⁵ . Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*, 76.

¹³⁶. The original French text is: "Les Tutsi sont des hommes superbes, aux traits fins et reguliers, avec quelque chose du type aryen et type semitique." Cited in Tharcisse Gatwa, *"The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994"*. (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1998), 109-110.

Francois Menard, writing in 1917, the "Tutsi est un Europeen sous une peau noire,"¹³⁷ (the Tutsi is a European under a black skin). Father Arnoux too wrote that, "Obviously, the Batutsi who are related to the Abyssinians, arrived a long a time after the other races. Those among them that descended from the nomadic root can be recognized by the Semitic face, slenderness and other physical detail. The cattle are a factor with which they exerted their domination on the inferior races through a feudal system similar to that of Middle Ages."¹³⁸ The only difference with Msgr Classe if there was any is that in 1916, the colonial government took advantage of his knowledge and expertise of Rwandan society and asked him to prepare a document called 'Race Policy'. He formulated the document based on his deeply felt convictions about race. As such, this policy became the preoccupation of the colonial power that from 1925 on, annual colonial administration reports included an extensive description of the "races in a chapter called "race policy" and included statements such as, " The Tutsi are another people. Physically, they have a resemblance of the Hutu, except, evidently, some 'declasses', whose blood isn't pure anymore. But the Tutsi of good race has, apart from color, nothing of a Negro. The physical characteristics remind one in a troubling way of the profile of the mummy of Ramses II. The Tutsi were destined to rule... Where are these conquerors coming

¹³⁷ . Gatwa, *"The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994."* (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1998),109-110.

¹³⁸ . Arnoux, A., Les peres blancs aux sources du Nil, cited in Gatwa. *"The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994"*: (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 69. Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises, 1900-1994*, (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 69.

from? They are not Bantu, this is quite certain. But their language is the one of the country, clearly Bantu, without any trace of infiltration regarding their origin.”¹³⁹

If we recall that Hamites were recognized as a “civilizing alien race,” then there would have to be institutions (education, state administration, taxation or the Church), in the mind of Msgr Leon Classe that would discriminate in favor of the Tutsi Hamites so as to make the theory a reality in Rwanda. Classe then had the opportunity to turn the ideology of racial supremacy into an institutional imprint, making it the basis of change in political, social and cultural relations. The Roman Catholic Church under Msgr. Classe’s leadership from 1907 through 1945 contributed to the gradual building up of group identities by dividing the population into distinctive races and distorting the essential tenets of Christian faith. The church contributed to the destruction of many factors of ethnic integration. For example, the people of Rwanda whether Hutu or Tutsi or Twa had an overlap in clan lineage and each clan irrespective of whether they were Hutu, Tutsi or Twa had specific community roles. On the one hand, as Slattery put it, identity grows out of prevailing narratives, sketched and redrafted out of human experiences, by culture, contexts, beliefs, values, ideals, interdicts, changes and continuity, on the other hand, it takes root in the sense of belonging to a web of social, economic, political,

¹³⁹ . The Original text reads as follows: (“Les Tutsi sont un autre. Physiquement ils n’ont aucune ressemblance avec les Hutu, sauf évidemment quelques déclassés dont le sang n’est pur. Mais le Tutsi de bonne race n’a, à part la couleur, rien de négre. Les caractéristiques physiques “rappellent de façon troublante le profil de momie de Ramses II. Les Tutsi étaient destinés à régner... D’où viennent ces conquérants? Ils ne sont pas Bantu, cela est bien certain. Mais leur langue est celle du pays, nettement bantoue, sans trace d’infiltration quant à leur origine.”), Administration Coloniale, Rwanda-Urundi (Brussels: Report Administration, 1915), 34-35; cited in Gatwa, *“The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994”*, (Oregon: Widf and Stock, 2005), 39-40.

cultural and religious relationships.¹⁴⁰ But Msgr Classe did not see it that way, instead, he appealed to the theories of race supremacy to provide sponsorship for literacy, and social constructs of a hegemonic character by selecting, educating and establishing an elite among one of the three social groups, the Tutsi, who were given the monopoly of power and other privileges. So he advocated for a Hamitic ethos to create an administrative hierarchy embedded in a self-conscious racialized elitism. Little did he and the rest of the missionaries know that they headed and represented a church that was planting frustrations and seeds of recrimination with the injustice of excluding other groups from power and opportunity.

The Church and the Racialization of the Education System

It had been the grand plan of Cardinal Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers to evangelize and convert rulers on a premise that subjects would easily follow the example of their leader. Msgr. Classe did not hesitate to follow this scheme in the hope that by equipping the Tutsi Elite, the 'born rulers' would fulfill the function of auxiliaries to the missionaries and colonial administration. In short, this plan would help Msgr. Classe to form an elite that is 'capable of understanding and implementing progress'. The 1927 colonial report highlighted the idea of having schools exclusively for sons of Tutsi, as presented to them by the missionaries as follows: "With the Batutsi Christian the missionaries hope to achieve the formation

¹⁴⁰. Slattery, M., *The issues of Identity: Churches in Northern Ireland and Rwanda*, (Edinburgh: University MA Thesis, 1996), 9-10; cited in Gatwa, "The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994". (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 36.

of a pro-European social elite. That elite is needed. Christianity provides it. Cardinal Lavigerie used to repeat to the missionary societies of Africa that it was necessary to give a foundation that rests on our civilization, namely Christianity. If it were not the case, the Negroes would not understand the civilization that is its offspring.”¹⁴¹

The White Fathers opened the first Western-style of school in Rwanda in 1905, in Nyanza. By 1908, it had twenty-six pupils, all sons of Tutsi chiefs. In July 1907, Father Dufays and Msgr Classe had started the construction of another school in Kabgayi. To “surely reach the sons of the chiefs of Batutsi, there has opened a special school for them,” so they explained as their objective. In 1910, the policy of “favoring the Mututsi of Rwanda” was formulated and addressed by Father Schumacher as a report to the Superior General. Msgr. Classe underlined the point in his extended study of 1911. The objective as we saw above was to turn the Tutsi, “the born rulers” of Rwanda, into an elite capable of understanding and implementing progress, and functioning as auxiliaries. There followed schools, no longer for sons of chiefs but specifically for sons of Tutsi chiefs: in Nyanza in 1912, Kabgayi and Rwaza in 1913, Kigali in 1914 and 1916, Save in 1917, and Rwamagana in 1919 authorities.¹⁴²

The obsession with the Tutsi-focused education was so strong that during the so-called colonial reforms under governors Voison and Morteau, 1924-1931, which consisted of the regrouping of chieftaincies from 200-40, there was an attempt to appoint some chiefs and sub-chiefs of Hutu and Twa background

¹⁴¹. Administration Coloniale Belge, *Rapport Rwanda-Urundi* (1927), 48; cited in Gatwa, “The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994, (Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 84.

¹⁴². Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 89.

alongside the Tutsi. The idea was resisted strongly by the head of the church, Msgr. Classe. In his famous letter of protest on 21 September 1927, Classe wrote: "If we want to be really practical and to look for the interest of the country, we have in the Mututsi youth an incomparable element for progress...Ask the Bahutu if they prefer to be commanded by roturiers, or by nobles, the response is without hesitation; their preference goes to the Batutsi. And for good reason. Born to be chiefs, the latter have a sense of authority...it is the secret of their conquest of the country."¹⁴³

Later on when Classe realized that his message was not understood, he wrote an article in the *Essor Colonial et Maritime* where he reiterated his assertion: "The most damaging thing the government could do against itself and against the country would be to destroy the Mututsi caste. A revolution of such kind would lead the country straight to anarchy and to a hatefully anti-European communism. As a general rule we will have no better, more intelligent, more active chiefs capable of understanding and executing the change and most accepted by the people than the Batutsi."¹⁴⁴

Classe's position had an additional, undesired effect. Let me explain: When Europeans arrived, they found out that the Tutsi kings had an old tradition of elevating high dignity Hutu and Twa lineages, giving them rank in the land holding

¹⁴³ Gatwa, Tharcisse, *Victims or Guilt? Can the Rwandan Churches Repent and Bear the Burden of the Nation for the 1994 Tragedy: International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXVIII No.351, 1999, p. 355.

¹⁴⁴. Reyntjens, Filip, *L'Afrique des Grands Lac (Rwanda-Burundi: 1988-1994) en Crise, Paris, Karthala, 1994*, p.19; cited in Gatwa, "Victims or Guilt? Can the Rwandan Churches Bear the Burden of the Nation for the 1994 Tragedy?", 351.

class, them and their descendants.¹⁴⁵ This tradition was known as *kwi hutura* and according to Professor Mamdani it prevented Hutu/Tutsi distinctions from hardening into feudal-type orders, just as it prevented the formation of a Hutu counter élite that would in time challenge Tutsi domination.¹⁴⁶ This could happen in areas where Tutsis mixed with Hutus and Twas especially in the central part of Rwanda. However, there were other principalities such as Ndorwa, Mutara, and Mulera regions in the north, Busonzo, Bushizi and Bushiru in the northwest initially only occupied and led by the Hutu. Previous Tutsi kings had fought and tried unsuccessfully to annex these principalities. However, following the 1884 Berlin Conference that was chaired by Otto von Bismark, the Prussian Chancellor, at which arbitrary boundaries of the East African region were made between German, Belgium and Britain, these Hutu principalities were annexed within the new boundaries created by German in 1910.¹⁴⁷ In 1916, Msgr. Classe still identified other areas like Kinyaga, Budaha, Gisaka and Kingogo as traditional Bahutu monarchies, which were not subordinate to the central kingdom. He advised the colonial government whose reforms made these chiefdoms get absorbed into Tutsi power.¹⁴⁸

According to Prunier, the above move strengthened the power of the Tutsi king since he indirectly ruled under the Germans.¹⁴⁹ According to Gatwa, although

¹⁴⁵. Prunier, Gerald, *The Rwanda Crisis, History of Genocide*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 26.

¹⁴⁶. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 70. Also see page 101.

¹⁴⁷. Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 34-35.

¹⁴⁸. Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 43.

¹⁴⁹. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crises*, 25.

the Tutsi king was at the top of the local chain of power, Hutu chiefs and sub-chiefs remained the traditional rulers in these annexed regions while imposing German rule through the Tutsi king. According to Msgr. Classe's position of Tutsi supremacy, all Hutu chiefs and sub-chiefs, first had to be removed from leadership positions in areas where the Tutsi king traditionally elevated them and, second from those areas which purely belonged to Hutus but were brought under the power of the Tutsi king during the formation of the 1910 colonial boundaries. The Belgian colonial powers trusted Msgr. Classe for his advice due to his knowledge and expertise in these matters to the extent that existing Hutu chiefs were fired and to use Mamdani's phrase, new Tutsi chiefs were *parachuted* into those incorporated principalities named above.¹⁵⁰ The program of *Tutsification* became so important that by the end of the Belgian presence in Rwanda in 1959, forty-three chiefs out of forty-five were Tutsi as well as 549 sub-chiefs out of 559.¹⁵¹

By the early 1930s, government schools were phased out and missionaries assumed control of the education system because their argument of 'producing Christianized Tutsi elites had convinced the colonial powers. The system they created had two tiers. The tendency to restrict admission mainly to Tutsi especially in the Upper schools like at the Groupe Scolaire d'Astrida (Now the National University of Rwanda at Butare) that was producing agronomists, veterinarians and economists. It was not until 1945 that the first Hutu got enrolled at this school. Whenever both Tutsi and Hutu children were admitted, there was a clear differentiation in the education meted out to each. The Tutsi were given "superior"

¹⁵⁰. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 91.

¹⁵¹. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crises*, 26-27

education, by teaching them in French in a separate classroom. *The assimilationist* education prepared the Tutsi for administrative positions in government and testified to their preparation for citizenship, even if at the lowest orders. In contrast, the Hutu children were given an education considered “inferior,” since it was taught in Kiswahili. The point of the *seperationist* education was not simply to prepare them for manual labor but also to underline the political fact that the educated Hutu were not destined for common citizenship. The products of the French classroom identified themselves as “Hamites” and those of the Kiswahili classroom as “Bantu.”¹⁵² It is very clear that with such a policy the Catholic Church laid the foundation for the racial ideology, which was discriminatory against the Hutu and Twa peoples of Rwanda¹⁵³.

In one of his radical moves, Msgr. Classe corroborated with the colonial administration to overthrow king Musinga, a Tutsi, who he considered to be a threat to his missionary activities. It is true that Classe like Cardinal Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers recognized the importance of converting before converting the subjects. However, king Musinga didn't seem enthusiastic about embracing Christianity and there were some chief who could not act contrary to the wishes of the king by allowing themselves to be converted. According to Rene Lemarchand, for the king Musinga to accept Christianity meant the desacralisation of the king's power, and the relegation of the office holder to a subordinate position. Already the presence of a resident colonial governor had curtailed his powers and he believed that, since he was not able to kill whom he pleased, or even retain his followers in

¹⁵². Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 89-90.

¹⁵³. Gatwa, *The Churches in Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*, 86.

the traditional cult, he had lost all his powers and the missionaries were more powerful than himself. By accepting Christianity the king saw that he would be accepting a structure that would limit his power of authority.¹⁵⁴ When persuasion did not work, Msgr. Classe called upon the power of the state to clear the ground for successful evangelism by deposing the king into exile in Congo where he later died in 1943. Some of the chiefs who continued to resist conversion were branded “sorcerers, diviners, superstitious and were deposed.”¹⁵⁵ For the first time in the history of Rwanda, the king was removed by force from his throne while installing a successor, Rudahigwa, his son in a very unusual manner. Monsignor Classe together with governor Voison ignored the traditional rituals and ceremonies of enthronement and the two installed the king without consulting the elders of Rwanda.

First of all, this was very unusual because a king either could become ill and die or could be killed in war, the only possibilities for him to be absent from his throne or kingdom but not deposition. Second, it did not mean that he was without supporters that added to the first point shows the underlying consequences of deposition on the socio-ethnic relations and the density of Christianity in Rwandan society. Third, the newly installed king is alleged to have converted to Catholicism and subsequently ordered for the conversion of all the subjects. The Banyarwanda called this movement *Irivuze Mwami*, what the king has said you must follow. According to many views, the king never gave such an order, but those concerned,

¹⁵⁴. Lemarchand, Rene, *Rwanda and Burundi*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 70.

¹⁵⁵. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 92.

the missionaries and the King let the confusion thrive so as to harvest religious and political benefit.¹⁵⁶ Although the subsequent mass conversions came to be referred to the “Tornado” in missionary literature and the transformation of Rwanda in the second “Christian Kingdom” after that of “Priest Jan”¹⁵⁷, inferring from the actions of the Church in the 1994 genocide one can say that most of these conversions were dubious only aiming at quantity but not quality. When Ian Linden stated that having deposed the king meant that chiefs needed a way to secure and legitimize their roles as the custodians of the Christian culture¹⁵⁸, it meant that this was a question of political survival first for the chief to be baptized and second for him to push the population to conversion.

Other evidence point to the use of force for conversion in what is referred to as the *Huntzinger case*. When Father J. Gorju went on a canonical visit to Rwanda in 1917, he reported 36 cases of arrests, beatings, expropriations and imprisonment of chiefs and the people carried out for more than a year by Father Huntzinger who had become disappointed by lack of stability shown by the catechumens recruited by force. He then wrote: “ Those among the Christians who were judged as bad were set to be beaten or imprisoned. Father Huntzinger (in Kabgayi) has simply amplified the methods that he used in Nyundo. His successor, Father Schumacher referred to many violent incidents, beatings, legs kicked, teeth broken, etc. Here in his (Huntzinger’s) comment: ‘ of 3000 catechumens recruited with beating, only 300

¹⁵⁶ . Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 90.

¹⁵⁷ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 93; Rutayisire, ‘*Les conversions massives*’ cited in Gatwa, “The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in Rwandan Crises (1900-1994). 90.

¹⁵⁸ . Linden, Ian, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*. (New York: Manchester University Press, 1977), 101-102.

remain. During this term, I had 5 recruits, despite all the pain I took. Our brigands or catechists in the branches have trained brigands of catechumens, none of who we will baptize.”¹⁵⁹

The above tone in terms of ‘brigand’ and ‘beating’ shows the ferociousness of a clergy man who could not resist using force to convert the people. During the German colonial administration, the Resident Dr Kandt criticized these methods. He lamented over the fact that in Save, the predecessor of Huntzinger, Father Bradt, reigned by terror, imprisonment and beatings. Dr Kandt wrote: “Father Brandt ruled without hindrance, discouraging on all occasions the Watutsi for whom he felt a strong hatred in Save. He would force people to obey them, oblige the Waganda (missionary aids from Uganda) to follow the class, keep the chiefs and the Watutsi as prisoners and release them if they paid a ransom; condemn them to a penalty of beating that would reach the limit of the tolerable; even perpetrate more serious crimes.”¹⁶⁰

Similar incidents happened in Nyundo, Rwaza and Zaza mission centers. Father Huntzinger went beyond the limits of his competence in investing himself with a political role; as he put it himself, he ‘took command of the country’ in assuming the command of the newly arrived Belgian troops when they took over from Germans. At the same time, he took upon himself the decision to dismiss and replace chiefs and sub-chiefs in his region without consulting with the local and colonial authorities. It was during that time that the canonical visit of Father Gorju

¹⁵⁹. Gatwa, *The Churches and the Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 91-92.

¹⁶⁰. Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 92.

took place. The Huntzinger case outraged colonial authorities. He was expelled and left Rwanda on April 25, 1918.¹⁶¹

From the above situation, we are able to see a combination of charm and political pressure towards the ruling class complemented by the use of force in the evangelization process. It is clear that the geographical and quantitative growth did not correspond to the qualitative results due to the use of physical constraints, which as we can see, was an actual manifestation of the *modus operandi* of the White Fathers. As a result of these processes, during the period 1933-39, 90% of the 1,250 chiefs and sub-chiefs of Rwanda were converted to Catholicism. The number of Christians baptized increased by 235,118 new members, rising from 58,061 members to 289,179. Then Father E. Hurel, superior of the Save Mission wrote: "Our Church is on the march, and, with God's will, in a good direction. The chiefs and the whole Mututsi youth have frankly taken the lead in the movement. The chiefs of the provinces are in their majority Christians or catechumens. And out of 9,014 solemnly baptized this year, 1,984 are Batutsi. The ruling class seems to be on our side and for us. It is the ruling class, which now brings the masses that had preceded them."¹⁶²

Behind Father Hurel's comment, it becomes obviously clear that there was a form of Christianity that grew out of the use of force on the population and that it was adopted for social and political privileges of the Tutsi ruling class. It is not

¹⁶¹. Rumiya, *Le Rwanda sous le regime*, page 195; cited in Gatwa, "The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)", 92.

¹⁶². Report of the White Fathers, 26th year 1930-31. In Muvala, *Introduction a l'histoire de l'evangelisation au Rwanda*, p.26; cited in Gatwa, "The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)", 93.

wrong therefore to suggest that Christianity of this sort had a dubious foundation; that of a colonial and missionary repression but not that of professing a Christian faith that is exemplified in people's practices. I therefore find a lot of truth in archbishop Kolini's statement at the top of this chapter that the Church was built on a shaky foundation. In fact some opponents of this growth or what was referred as a 'Tornado' considered it as a campaign created by Msgr. Classe so as to claim the triumph of Catholicism. Father P. Simoor of Zaza considered that the 'Tornado' was nothing more than the mediocrity of Rwandan Christianity' tolerated by its head, Msgr. Classe. One of his criticisms was that it never permitted sufficient preparation for baptism, due to the absence of personnel to respond to the huge demands. The League of Nations in Geneva also warned about the numbers of conversions and baptisms taking place in Rwanda; it asked if there was liberty of conscience. "Despite those questions, the missionaries accomplished the next step, the consecration of Rwanda and its inhabitants to Christ the King and Virgin Mary."¹⁶³

The Change for Expediency from Tutsi Alliance to Hutu Alliance

The period from 1940s to 1950s brought in Rwanda two broad processes of expansion namely that of the money economy and that of school-based Western education. Both these processes would erode the social supremacy of the Tutsi to a while, leaving intact their political supremacy. The cattle-based wealth of the Tutsi aristocracy remained largely for prestige and not for commercial purposes. The

¹⁶³. De Heusch, Responsibilities for a Genocide. *"Anthropology Today,"* Vol.11, No 4. (Aug., 1995), pp.3-7.

Belgian officialdom made every effort in forcing Hutu's peasantry to grow cash crops especially coffee for export. In opening up opportunities for enrichment other than owning cattle, the a few Hutu families started to send their children to the expanded education system of the time. Thus, this period started to witness an emergence of a Hutu counterelite.

The impact of the school system on the few Hutu who managed to enter its corridors was contradictory and explosive. On the one hand, it produced the political and social distinctions between Tutsi and Hutu at an intellectual level by operating a two-tier system: the Tutsi were introduced into a "civilized" French-medium education, but the Hutu were confined to a "nativized" second-rate Kiswahili-medium education. On the other hand, the same school system was the source of merit-based impulses that could not but generate egalitarian ideas, even the curriculum included a heavy dose of the Hamitic hypothesis.¹⁶⁴

But based on the total number of people from the census conducted by the Belgian authorities in 1933, that is (300, 000 Tutsis) and (1, 500,000 Hutus)¹⁶⁵, the numbers of Hutus who attended school were still ridiculously small. Until 1945, the Groupe Scolaire d'Astrita, highest secondary school in Rwanda had not admitted any Hutu from Rwanda but would take in Tutsi Students from both Rwanda and Burundi. Between 1945 and 1954, sixteen Hutu were admitted from Rwanda, as opposed to seventy-five from Burundi. In contrast, 389 Tutsi were admitted from both Rwanda and Burundi during the same period. There was a slight increase of Hutu enrolment in 1956.

¹⁶⁴ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 112.

¹⁶⁵. See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 98,

Ironically, the first Rwandan native to get University Education was Anastase Mukuza, a Hutu, and he graduated from the Center Universitaire de Kisantu (Congo-Kinshasha) in 1955. His example illustrates the social frustrations caused by Tutsi supremacy and the psychological consciousness that caused first generation Hutu elites to revolt against Tutsi domination. Somehow, he had attended the Grand Seminaire de Nyakibanda in Rwanda, and then joined the Center Universitaire de Kisantu in Congo, where he completed with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in administrative and political sciences. On return to Rwanda in 1955, he paid visit to king Mutara, a Tutsi, to explore the possibilities of government employment. He was turned down. He then went to the Institut pour la Recherche en Afrique Centrale (IRSAC) at Astrida (the highest secondary school) and asked to be a research assistant. He was again rebuffed. He then went to see the *directeur de l'enseignement* in Bujumbura (which was also under Tutsi domination), only to be told that the administration would not recognize his diploma. He ended up as a typist (*candid commis*) in Kibuye, promoted to administrative assistant in 1957, first in Changugu, and then in Kigali. Rene Lemarchand describes the significance of this case for the first Rwandan graduate: "Like other educated Hutu, he derived a burning sense of grievance from the monopoly exercised by the Tutsi caste over all sectors of the administration and the economy and so to break this monopoly became the pre-occupation of Hutu intellectuals."¹⁶⁶

Despite the practice of segregation policies, the Catholic seminaries had been open from the start to children of the Hutu who were allowed to train and join the

¹⁶⁶. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 133.

clergy. Apparently no one has been able to explain why seminaries worked different from other institutions of learning but I would like to assume that since the objective of Cardinal Lavigerie, the founder of the White Fathers, was initially to reach out to the souls of the Negroes, Hutu clergymen would be part of that role unlike if they were to join ranks in the secular administration. "But even then for those few Hutu clergy who managed to ascend the Church hierarchy, every climb up the ladder put them in a context dominated by Tutsi priests. The influence of the Western Church, much like that of the Western school system was contradictory. As an institution, the church had been the primary force advocating for the "civilizing" role of the Tutsi as Hamites. Accordingly, there was the preferential enrolment of the Tutsi into priesthood, at least until after the Second World War. But as an ideology, Christianity was a source of an egalitarian impulse for the Hutu, not just for the masses who entered the Church, but particularly for the few who did manage to join the priesthood."¹⁶⁷

Msgr. Deprimoz succeeded Msgr. Leon Classe in 1946 to head the predominant Roman Catholic Church on Rwanda. Unlike Msgr. Classe or Hirth, early leaders of the Church who were upper-class Flemish men with racist conservative views, the new leaders and missionaries who arrived after the Second World War were strongly influenced by antiracist ideological currents having seen the Nazi impact on Europe. "They were more generally disposed to identify with the plight of the Hutu Masses."¹⁶⁸ In 1957, the Hutu for the first time expressed in a manifesto a list of perfectly social demands in which they asked for the abolition of the socio-

¹⁶⁷ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 113.

¹⁶⁸ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 113.

political system based on inequality and the heresy of 'race supremacy'. In May 1958, the entourage of the Mwami (Tutsi king) published two hateful documents in which they used the myth of 'Ibimanuka' (those who descended from the sky) to justify 'race supremacy' as the right given to the Hamites'. Father Abbe Alexis Kagame, a Tutsi and historian of the central court, subscribed to the logic of the Hamite theory and conquests derived from missionaries such as Msgr. Classe, Schumacher, Canon de Lacger, Pages and Delmas to become a central figure among those protesting the Hutu petitions.¹⁶⁹ They totally rejected any suggestion of power sharing with the Bahutu.¹⁷⁰ The hateful document had an important implication. Whereas in pre-colonial Rwanda Tutsi kings under the (*kwi hutura tradition*) used to elevate dignified Hutu to positions of power and land holding privileges, this document clearly removed that possibility. The documents reveal how the Tutsi believe in an *alien* origin to the extent that some of their extreme views trace their origin in heaven! Gatwa observes that, "the myth of the *Hamite supremacy* had been strongly assimilated by the ruling class, an attitude which was soon going to be used to their detriment by those who were looked down upon."¹⁷¹

Hutu leaders continued to express their grievances and to use the Church as a platform to persuade a growing number of illiterate Hutu that they had been 'colonized' by the Tutsi who were described as foreign invaders that had imposed a 'feudal' rule on them. Within this heavily charged emotional atmosphere, Africa

¹⁶⁹. See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 113-114. Cf., with Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 98.

¹⁷⁰. Tharcisse Gatwa, Victims or Guilt? Can the Rwandan Churches Repent and Bear the Burden of the Nation for the 1994 Tragedy? *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXXXVIII No.351, 1999, p.357.

¹⁷¹. Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 51.

started to experience a wave of decolonization. The Tutsi elites immediately claimed independence from the Belgians but the Belgians were not yet ready and felt that the Tutsi's aristocrats were getting out of order. The Tutsi grouped massively behind a nationalist party called Union Nationale Rwandese (UNAR), and in an open confrontation with the Belgians objected any delay to independence. However, their plan was viewed both by Belgians and the Hutu as a guise to restore a Tutsi monarch like in the pre-colonial period. The difference that this would have from the pre-colonial period is that the boundaries of Rwanda were extended under the Colonial agreement of 1910 between German, Britain and Belgium. Should a Tutsi monarch be restored he would have much bigger territory than used to be the case in the pre-colonial time. Secondly, it would mean that Tutsi arrogance would be exerted on those areas that initially were not ruled by the *mwami* (king).

In the meantime, the Church now openly supported the Parmehutu, the party under Gregoire Kayibanda, which called for the emancipation of the Hutu as a priority. Msgr. Perraudin, Primate of the Church from 1956 acknowledged that privileges had been accorded to one 'race', supported the Parmehutu party. In fact the leading Hutu personalities such as Gregoire Kayibanda and Aloys Munyangaju were editors of for the Catholic periodicals. Kayibanda was also serving as personnel secretary to Msgr. Perraudin. Although Perraudin acknowledged the existence of the injustices, "he never showed regret for the past responsibility of the church in shaping differences and in imposing the monopoly of privileges in favor of the Tutsi to the detriment of the Hutu."¹⁷²

¹⁷² . Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 99.

This is how Kayibanda the future first Hutu president of the Republic used the opportunity to champion the emancipation of the Hutu: “Besides working as personnel secretary to the head of the Church, Msgr. Perraudin, he became the editor of *Kinyamateka*, the Church-owned Kinyarwanda –language paper in 1955, and then its editor- in- chief in 1956. In December of that year, Church authorities founded a cooperative: Travail Fidélite, Progres (TRAFIPRO). Kayibanda became the president of its board of directors. The expanding ground-level organization of TRAFIPRO came to serve as cells for the development of the Hutu movement. It was from this base –the editorship of *Kinyamateka* and the presidency of the board of TRAFIPRO that Kayibanda launched the Movement Social Muhutu (MSM) in June 1957.”¹⁷³

Tensions between Tutsis and Hutus became high but the death of the king Mutara, (the one formally installed by Msgr Classe and governor Voison by ignoring traditional rituals), became the catalyst for violence. First of all he died very suddenly in Bujumbura hospital and his death was blamed on the Belgians. During the funeral, the guardians (*abiiru*) immediately pronounced a 24-year an inexperienced half brother to succeed him on 28 July 1959. The appointment was done without consulting the Belgian authorities in an atmosphere filled with suspicion. Within this time, “there were confrontations between the Parmehutu party and the chiefs of the promonarchy UNAR party in Gitarama. When news spread that promonarchy militants attacked a Parmehutu leader, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, violence spread like fire in the whole country where Tutsi chiefs

¹⁷³ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 118.

and sub-chiefs became the primary target. The visiting UN Mission of 1960 estimated the killing at 200 but added that the number may be higher since the people preferred to bury their dead silently.”¹⁷⁴ In fear that Tutsi soldiers would take matters into their hands, the Belgian governor, Harroy, declared a state of emergency and put the country under the command of Colonel B.E.M Guy Logiest, who at that time was residing in Congo.

As soon as Colonel Logiest arrived in Kigali, he announced that his duty was to ‘disfavor the Tutsi element’ and favor the Hutu element that for him represented order. “Nothing could be clearer. Colonel Logiest, a Staff College officer declared war on the Tusti. Thousands of huts were burnt, a larger number of Tutsi chiefs and sub-chiefs were removed and replaced by Hutu.”¹⁷⁵ Some of the Tutsi elites run into exile. But the Colonel did not stop there. He augmented a Hutu administration with an embryonic Hutu-dominated armed force: an indigenous military guard of 650 men was formed in May 1960. When communal elections were organized in July 1960, the direct impact of the chiefs and sub-chiefs favored the Hutu and the Parmehutu because Tutsi chiefs who would benefit the promonarchy party, UNAR, had been removed making it powerless. Parmehutu won by 70.4 percent of the votes as opposed to 1.7 percent for UNAR party. United Nations later on initiated parliamentary elections that were held in September 1961. The Parmehutu won with 78 percent and UNAR got 17 percent. Gregoire Kayibanda of the Parmehutu party was declared the new president of the republic and the monarchy was completely removed. Some of the Tutsi categorized by Professor Mamdani as

¹⁷⁴ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 123.

¹⁷⁵ . De Heusch, *Responsibilities for a Genocide*, 4

progressives wanted to form a coalition with the Hutu majority but those more extreme to the right, among them detested the whole affair. Instead, they opted to form bands of armed guerrillas alongside those who had run into exile in the early stages of Colonel Logiest military take over. Indeed, they made raids into Rwanda and targeted Hutu administrators. These raids invited a cruel repression, which began to assume a standard form. It targeted the local Tutsi population as active or potential support for the guerrillas known as *inyenzi* or cockroaches.

The worst case of repressed took place in March 1962 after two successive raids; one Hutu policeman and two civil servants were killed in Bumba prefecture in February and an ordinary Hutu in March. After the March killing, between 1000 and 2000 Tutsi men, women and children were massacred and buried on the spot, their huts burned and pillaged and their property divided among the Hutu population. The following year in October 1963, Major Tulpin, the Belgian military advisor predicted another 'terrorist' raid from the cockroaches (*canclelats*). It was true and they entered from the south via Burundi. Badly armed, they were quickly crushed under the command of Belgian soldiers. Then ensued throughout the country the first collective massacre of the Tutsi population. Their last leaders to stay were loaded on trucks, headed to the forest and summarily executed on the orders of one or more Belgian soldiers. Luc de Heusch who was living in Rwanda, in whom Major Tulpin confided in some of these issues thinks that from December 1963 to January 1964, more than 10,000 Tutsi were killed 'with an incredible brutality'. Major Tulpin told him that this was a 'sport'.¹⁷⁶ Catharine Newbury and

¹⁷⁶ . See Luc de Heusch, *Responsibilities for Genocide*, p.5

David Newbury put the figures of the massacres between 10,000 and 14,000¹⁷⁷. Human Rights Watch put the figure at as many as 20,000.¹⁷⁸ During this time, the Church said nothing instead it repositioned itself on appointing new leaders who were favorable in the eyes of the new administration. President Gregoire Kayibanda sent his ministers to each prefecture or province to stir up the Hutu to hatred that all Tutsi are aliens. Those who survived the 1963-64 massacres run into Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania joining with those who had escaped the 1959 revolution under Colonel Logiest.

Although Kayibanda was modest unlike other African leaders, he ruled as a despot provoking descent from his single party. His power weakened and in a hope to revive it, he decided to go for the Tutsi who he severely oppressed. Some Tutsi who never went to exile were economically all right because the pre-colonial and colonial eras had favored them. But the unemployed Hutu continued to spread anti-Tutsi sentiments, which made the president weaker. His chief of Staff, General Juvenal Habyarimana overthrew him 1973, putting him under house arrest where he was later assassinated. Between 1974 and 1980, most of the official with whom President Kayibanda had worked were imprisoned in Ruhengyeri but later on disappeared, atrociously killed without being tried; their families were left in the dark without their fate. Some of the atrocious conditions under which they were killed resemble those horrific massacres of the 1994 genocide. Some were buried

¹⁷⁷ . Newbury, Catharine, and David S. Newbury. "Was the Genocide in Rwanda and Ethnic Struggle?" Mimeo, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; cited in Mamdani, *"When Victims Become Killers"*, 130.

¹⁷⁸ . Human Rights Watch Arms Project, "Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War," *Human Rights Watch* 6, no.1 (January 1994): 8.

alive, others put in bags and beaten to death, others were tied behind speeding jeeps on the road between Ruhengeri and Gisenyi.¹⁷⁹

At the surface, President Habyarimana was a devout Roman Catholic who kept up appearances by 'draping in appearances in the banners of processions and prayer-meetings'. These acts appeased the Christian Social Democrats of Belgium. But the oligarchy grouped around his in laws nicknamed *Akazu* (the little hut) had only one ambition, getting rich. Its members traded in drugs and arms and controlled prostitution. The *Akazu* controlled the whole country closely, prison regime was abominable. All this seemed to be happening under the blessing of the Roman Catholic Archbishop, Msgr Vincent Nsengiyumva, an intimate friend of the *Akazu* and a member of Habyarimana's single party rule of the *Movement Revolutionnaire National pour la Democratie et le Developpement* (MRND). Msgr Nsengiyumva was the Primate who was nominated under the influence of President Habyarimana to succeed Msgr. Perraudin whose era came to an end after his protégé Kayibanda was overthrown. This is how Gatwa describes how President Habyarimana controlled the church: "all church institutions and offices were integrated into the structures of the ruling party. Any church institutions, including those of schools, hospitals, bishops offices, nuns' convents, and charity organizations were considered to be a cell or base organ of the party. These institutions had in authority the members of the clergy, bishops, priests, pastors, nuns, and brothers

¹⁷⁹ . An official list published by the government in *Imvaho* No.590 and 591 of 1 and 8 July 1985 and the acts of the Tribunal de Premiere Instance de Ruhengeri, 29 June 1985 contained the record of 59 people assassinated under atrocious conditions. It is believed more that 700 people were murdered. Shyirambere Barahinyura, *Le General-Major Habyarimana, 1973-1988*; cited in Gatwa, "The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in Rwandan Crises, (1900-1994)," 123.

who automatically became their official representatives in the MRND organs.”¹⁸⁰ It also confirms what Bishop John Rucyahana told be in an interview that the Church was completely pocketed to the extent that it could not carry out its prophetic role during the genocide.¹⁸¹ The archbishop was named by President Habyarimana as Chairman of the very influential *Commission of Social Affairs* of the ruling party hence a government salary, a government house, a government car with a driver were all accorded to him. All the other churches went into competition for government favors. Otherwise, how do you criticize a hand that feeds you?

Another development that took place during the Habyarimana regime was that all the clergy forbade contraception, and Rwanda whose demography was one of the strongest south of the Sahara in the middle of the century, experience a population explosion of more than 7 million inhabitants in 1990, sharing a small territory of 26, 338 square kilometers where the plots available for subsistence farming got fewer and fewer.¹⁸² In the period 1988-89 Rwanda experienced a very severe famine and partly due to land shortage.

On several occasions, families of Tutsi refugees in Uganda expressed the desire to return to Rwanda. The Habyarimana regime always refused on these occasions that Rwanda was too small with too little natural resources to accommodate a big population in addition to the 7 million. However, the frustrations of living as refugees made those in Uganda to join the rebel forces of Yoweri Museveni who was fighting Milton Obote, the president of Uganda. They

¹⁸⁰ . Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises* (1900-1994), 127.

¹⁸¹ . Rucyahana, John, Bishop, *Interview in Ruhengeri*, June 28, 2010.

¹⁸² . De Heusch, *Responsibilities for Genocide*, 6.

aimed acquiring skills and to return by force of arms the country from which their parents and grand parents had been driven out and to which they were refused access. Disciplined soldiers in desperation, they decided to launch an invasion in October 1990.

Other serious factors were causing a crisis in Rwanda. President Habyarimana had various opposition factions among the Hutu, a tough situation that obliged him to do away with his single party rule of MRND. When the Tutsi refugees launched an invasion from Uganda, some of the members belonging the opposition party of the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwiringiyimana were pro the invaders and wanted President Habyarimana to engage in Peace-Talks and end the war by sharing power. It was obvious the invaders were all Tutsi and so some of the other factions especially that of *Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique* (CDR) strongly objected making peace with the Tutsi. It became so extreme a group and incited the public using hateful speech against the Tutsi invaders. Gatwa records one of those inflammatory speeches given by Leon Mugesera at a rally in Kabaya, on 22 November 1992:

“Whoever wants peace prepares for war. Listen well to me, it is the fourth or fifth time I repeat this in our prefecture of Gisenyi... I was recently talking to a militant of PL (a party of the Prime Minister, Agathe Uwiringiyimana which advocated for peace-talks and power sharing with the Tutsi army that invaded from Uganda) that the grave mistake committed in the revolution of 1959, though I was too young, was to allow the Tutsi to escape alive outside the country. I told him. I tell you that your country (Tutsi) is Ethiopia, and we will soon send you on an express trip via the

Nyabarongo (river that is the source of the Nile river). Here you are, I repeat this to you: you must start the work right now... Finally, I want to remind you the essential part of my speech: vigilance in the first instance. Know that whoever you have not beheaded is the one who will behead you.”¹⁸³ Some time later on RTLM radio, Mugesera told the public that, “we the people are obliged to take responsibility ourselves and wipe out this (Tutsi) scum.”¹⁸⁴

What is key here is that the Hamite theory had been kept alive by those it had once suppressed but are now using it against those who flourished in it. It also reveals that genocide was an organized planned scheme and not an accident. The perpetrators organized it several ways. “They did it by having senior government officials go into the areas or meet with local administrators. That happened in Gitarama in the center of the country on April 18. It happened in Butare on April 19. They also removed administrators who had opposed the genocide, including the governor of Butare and the governor of Kibungo. The governor of Kibungo was killed almost immediately. The governor of Butare was hunted down for several weeks and eventually slaughtered, as was his family.”¹⁸⁵

But this hateful rhetoric did not stop the threat weighing on the Tutsi invasion to become heavier and heavier. Rwanda’s neighbors of Uganda and Tanzania added to the persuasion of making peace and averting the war. He was torn between the two for he seemed to say yes to the external pressure but also to

¹⁸³ . Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 124-125.

¹⁸⁴ . Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 195.

¹⁸⁵ . Des Forges, Alison, *Interview*, New York, October 1, 2003. Online: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/desforges.html>.

say no to the people inside Rwanda. As the threat increased, a 'killing machine' was set up. "The regime distributed 'self-defense' weapons to the population. Lists were drawn up of *ennemis de l'interieur*.¹⁸⁶ But the country was living in euphoria by March of 1994. President Habyarimana had eventually made up his mind to approve a provisional government during a conference on the future of Rwanda and Burundi (which had similar problems) in Dar-es-Salam. On Wednesday 6 April 1994, at 20:30 pm, the plane carrying President Habyarimana, and the President of Burundi, Cyprian Ntaryamira, was fired on with a missile when attempting to land at Kigali airport from the Dar-es-Salam conference. The plane crashed killing the two presidents together with the entire delegation of both countries and the crew. A day later, thousands of people were massacred: The Prime Minister, Mrs. Agathe Uwiringiyimana, and moderate members of her Transition Cabinet that had advocated for making peace with the Tutsi army. Human rights activists, business people, lawyers, professors, journalists, priests, medical doctors, school teachers and them common people of Batutsi background or those who had entered into marriage relationships with them were whether Hutu or not were killed.

The radios especially *Radio television de Milles Collines* (RTLM), the *Kangura* local news paper all became propaganda machines to incite the public to commit mass murder and Rwanda descended into the darkest hour of the twenty-first century madness. People were herded like goats and cut down in pieces like grass. Hospitals, schools and roads for those who were escaping became killing grounds. Children were thrown against walls or rocks while others were thrown on sharp

¹⁸⁶ . De Heusch, *Responsibilities for Genocide*, 6.

pieces of wood and left there. When I visited Rwamagana in June 2010, a perpetrator at the Gacaca court hearing testified that they would even throw some of the people in the pits while still alive. They would first cut their legs to make sure they do not walk. In all it is estimated that about One Million people lost their lives.

Some of the fearful populations run to churches in anticipation that church leaders would provide refuge and comfort in those dark times. Unfortunately, most of the churches became killing grounds too like hospitals or schools. Some of the priests for example, Father Wincelas Munyashyaka, the curate at Sainte-Famille church, sheltered eight thousand refugees but provided the killing militia with lists of those he alleged had expressed sympathy for the Tutsi army. He agreed to let them come in and pick off those they wanted. He was seen wearing a flak jacket and toting a pistol during the massacres.¹⁸⁷ One has to ask, a pistol for what? Romeo Dallaire is right then when he says that the genocide led many to die an agonizing death of machete wounds inside the hundreds of sweltering churches, chapels and mission where they'd gone to seek God's protection and ended instead in the arms of Lucifer.¹⁸⁸

Although it would be a mistake to assume that all priests behave like Father Munyashyaka, it is important to recognize that there was no official statement from the Church hierarchy that condemned this violence. In fact Archbishop Vincent Nsengiyumva of the Roman Catholic Church moved with the interim government

¹⁸⁷. See Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 227.

¹⁸⁸. Dallaire, Romeo Lt. Gen, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004), 510.

from Kigali to Gitarama¹⁸⁹. It was the government that was perpetuating these crimes but he never said a word against them. At a press conference in Nairobi in early June, more than two months in the genocide, the Anglican archbishop refused unequivocally to denounce the interim government. Alison Des Forges also observed that “many local clergy both Roman Catholic and Protestant gave tacit approval to the slaughter by participating in security committee meetings.”¹⁹⁰ It was known that those who shot the President’s plane were from the opposition who assumed power as soon as the President was killed but he never said anything about that. In the first instance, we must remember that the Church and the colonial authorities had *racialized* the Tutsi to make them alien. We also must remember that when it became convenient for the Tutsi to be abandoned and to favor the Hutu, it was Msgr. Perraudin who connived with Colonel Logiest to abandon their former allies.

The Church stands to be blamed for the cause of the genocide because it became the agency, the vehicle of the ideology of revenge and genocide. It heralded racial ideology of the Hamite theory during the colonial times but when it converted to the cause, it did not support it genuinely. It needed to first correct the earlier mistakes, something that required courage and humility even to the point of humiliation that might have led to a radical change of racial attitude. Perhaps it would require some reparations to the first victims of segregation but that did not happen. Instead the Church found it expedient to abandon their former allies and to

¹⁸⁹. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 226.

¹⁹⁰. Des Forges, Alison Liebhasfsky, “Leave none to tell the Story”: *Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999) 189.

befriend the former victims. They even failed to address the plight of refugees in exile nor condemn the atrocities committed by the government. What is a Church that fails to articulate a right theology for her flock? Longman also made an observation that since Rwanda's churches were repositories of power, thus inherently political organizations, capable both of buttressing authority and challenging it constitutes a huge theoretical advance in conceptualizing the role of religion in public life.¹⁹¹ Had the church educated the population in promoting peace, human rights, and justice, there would be no genocide because those numbers referred to as the 'Tornado' would have reflected love but not hate.

¹⁹¹. See his book: Timothy Longman, *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*. 1st Edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Chapter Four

The role and contribution of Gacaca in transforming the culture of genocide

By the time I visited Rwanda for research in June 2010, the government of post genocide Rwanda had remodeled the historical gacaca courts and enacted the *Gacaca Law*, officially launching it in 2002 as the most single pathway for justice and reconciliation after the 1994 genocide. I therefore went into the field with an assumption that since these courts have been operational for eight years, I would get first hand experience on their *modus operandi* and learn about the gains they have so far achieved in the process of peace and reconciliation. In fact the National Director of the gacaca courts told me that out of the ten thousand courts initially set up in 2001 in the whole country for the trial of 120,000 thousand *genocidaires*,¹⁹² only nineteen courts were still remaining to make the hearings. He advised me to attend the up coming hearing at Nyarugali in Rwamagana, a distance of about twenty miles east or north east of Kigali, Rwanda's capital city.¹⁹³

Apart from the importance of attending the courts and see how they work, hear and listen to the testimonies both in support of or against survivors and

¹⁹². A French term used to refer to people accused of participating in the genocide.

¹⁹³ . Denise, Bikesha, *Interview*, June 11, 2011.

perpetrators, I intended to *only* interview church leaders mainly because of two important reasons. First, I wanted to learn from them about any progress that the gacaca has helped church congregations toward peace and reconciliation. Second, due to the allegations that the church has been complacent to ethnic divisions starting with the colonial period, and that clergy (bishops, priests) and nuns had an active role in the 1994 genocide, I wanted to have their opinion on a Hebrew Biblical text such as 2 Kings 14:5-6, most especially since it is the text that King Amaziah invoked to move Israelite society away from a carnage similar to that of Rwanda. In other words I was interested to learn how 2 Kings 14:5-6 can be interpreted in light of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Still, I wanted to learn from clergy if the gacaca principles lend gravitas to the adaptation and adoption of a Hebrew Biblical message and whether the clergy are willing to take their congregations in the direction that King Amaziah took Israelite society, a subject that I will later on discuss in chapter five. There were a few other people interviewed who were not clergy but who I could not avoid by virtue of their duties in relation to the gacaca. After acquiring the official documents to permit me to carry out research in the country, I first chose to do interviews before attending the gacaca court hearings with the aim that information from the courts and how they operate would help me build on that information from the people's views and opinions of the gacaca and its justification for peace and reconciliation. Before I present my findings, however, I would like to first give a background to the gacaca.

Background to the Gacaca

Although I have listened to Archbishop Desmond Tutu say at several public occasions that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which he headed in South Africa gave amnesty to the perpetrators of the apartheid atrocities in return for truth telling, I could not comprehend how South Africa, a nation of laws could let go free such mass killers simply for admitting that they killed or were accomplices in the apartheid killings. It was not until June and July 2010 during my fieldwork research in Rwanda, while conducting interviews and having discussions with church leaders and other people that I came to understand that dealing with the legacy of violence is not simply a matter of bringing perpetrators to justice. I was made aware that if a post-conflict society is to embark on a path for sustainable peace, especially if that society is characterized by a long history of violence, as a fundamental aspect of attaining peace and reconciliation, it must have procedures in its policies and politics that will help that society to work toward the need for reconciliation and to mollify those ethnic tensions that have characterized it for a long time. It doesn't matter if forgiveness of the crimes is part of these procedures and if outsiders fail to understand why there should be forgiveness of the crimes as long as the concerned parties are determined to overcome the most hateful divisions in their society that caused violence.

While in Rwanda, I could then understand how some difficult decisions are made. For instance, for a victim to pardon a perpetrator he has first to accept that he has lost everything even any moral advantage he may have. This is a huge sacrifice

for the sake of peace, a resolve in the wisdom to pursue peacemaking versus retribution. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how *Gacaca* is a community based conflict resolution mechanism intended to address post genocide transformation needs of Rwanda. I will illustrate how the culpable are not excluded from society, but are made to return in society after they have confessed. They have, of course to pay a penalty and some of them a heavy one for the damage caused. However, the majority stays in society and are discouraged to repeat crimes another time. They will be punished but at the same time be offered the possibility to live with the population.

During an interview with the Executive Secretary of the National Service for Gacaca Courts, Domitilla Mukantagazwa¹⁹⁴, and the Chief of Mobilization and Sensitization for Unity Formation, Denis Bikesha¹⁹⁵, they explained to me that pre-colonial Rwanda had a justice system known as Gacaca which resolved social disputes and enabled the Rwandans to live together in harmony. Originally, gacaca (pronounced *ga-cha-cha*), derives its name from a type of clean 'grass' or 'lawn' feeling like a very soft carpet known in Rwanda's national language as *umucaca*. Constance Morrill thinks that it was the only "real" justice system before the colonizers introduced written laws.¹⁹⁶ After I saw this grass, indeed it feels like a very soft carpet, perhaps the reason why the people preferred to sit on it during the sessions. In an interview with Bishop John Rucyahana told me that this grass used to

¹⁹⁴. Domitilla Mukantagazwa, *Interview*: Kigali, June 11, 2010

¹⁹⁵. Denise Bikesha, *Interview*: Kigali, June 11, 2010.

¹⁹⁶. Constance F. Morrill, *Reconciliation and the Gacaca, The Perceptions and Peace Building Potential of Rwandan Youth Detainees*, Vol.1, Fall 1-66, 2004, page 3.

grown on community compounds¹⁹⁷, a suggestion, perhaps that people primarily planted it for its beauty on a home or community yard and sitting on it whenever deliberating over community disputes came about as a secondary role. On this grass, two people in a dispute could be brought face to face before their community members, encouraged to make a public confession, repent, ask for forgiveness and pay a fine if need be. However, when I attended gacaca court hearings in Rwamagana at Nyarugali, or at Ntarama, even at Nyamata, I found out that the term gacaca is currently more of a concept than the mere presence of the soft grass.

In all the hearings I attended the judges sat on benches and worked from desks that were arranged in a semi-circle position, facing prisoners, who either sat on their own benches or on the floor at regular *un-soft* grass while being closely watched by a prison guard. Since I had been granted permission to attend these proceedings, I was given my own bench and desk and together with my interpreter we would sit very close to the judges in order to listen to every detail of the hearings. I was neither allowed to take pictures nor to record voices except taking notes, an act that would have become rather tedious if I were to sit on the ground. Only a few of the people sat on the regular grass (not umucaca) while the rest of the crowd remained standing, and many others leaning against the Eucalyptus trees under whose canopy all us would remain shielded from the blazing sun. Gacaca, therefore, is a concept borrowed from a pre-colonial means of dispensing justice outside on a soft lawn to a community with the participation of community members. In fact as Constance Morrill has observed, it is a practice associated with

¹⁹⁷. Rucyahana, Bishop, *Interview in Ruhengeri*, June 28, 2010.

the activities that used to take place in any open-air, grassy areas, such as the discussion and resolution of problems within the community.¹⁹⁸

In historical Rwanda, these courts were used to settle issues such as land use and rights, cattle, marriage, inheritance rights, loans, damage to properties caused by one of the parties or animals and petty theft. Elders or wise men of exemplary character in the community known as *inyangamugayo*, “literally people who hate evil,” presided over the court. The *inyangamugayo* would bring parties in a dispute together in the open air and sit at the local “lawn” or (*gacaca*) to mediate. The rest of the community would participate in the hearing, joining in with shouts to express support or opposition to the different arguments made. An elder who requested not to mention his name told me during my research visit that community participation was especially important if it was generally agreed that the dispute over an issue had disrupted their peace.

The judges or the *inyangamugayo* were selected on account that each of them exhibited exemplary qualities. First of all, they were all men that were accepted by their community to be those who detest opprobrium¹⁹⁹. Their status of being judge was attained by virtue of their probity, old age, erudition, and wisdom in decision-making, altruism or political or economic influence within the community. They would assign sentences according to the nature of the act committed by the guilty party and sentences always-involved reparations to the wronged party.

Imprisonment could not be part of the sentence because the European colonialists

¹⁹⁸. Constance F. Morrill, *Reconciliation and the Gacaca*, 3.

¹⁹⁹. The current term in Rwanda that is interchangeably used with *inyangamugayo* is *les intègres* or “honest people”. In the current *gacaca* jurisdiction, women are also *inyangamugayo*.

introduced prisons later on after they colonized Rwanda. In instances where an individual incurred the commission of a wrong, all members of the clan or family to which the individual belonged shared the responsibility for that wrong. Consequently, family or clan members were equally responsible for making reparations to the wronged party. Alice Karakezi argues that clan members representing both parties would first decide the terms and value of the reparations in a negotiated settlement.²⁰⁰

Family or clan participation is related to the corporate existence the individual and how she or he owes that existence to the others in the community. This notion is supported by John Mbiti in another un related study that the individual is part of the whole community to the extent that if that person finds himself into difficulties, it is not unusual for him to call upon that community for help, e.g. in paying fines caused by an accident, such as the accidental wounding or killing of another person, even damage to property. This sense of kinship is extended in other instances such as finding enough goods to exchange for a wife or today in giving financial support to students in institutions of higher education both at home and abroad.²⁰¹ When there is a problem requiring the execution of justice there is too much focus on reconciliation; all procedures and sanctions are concentrated on this goal.

²⁰⁰. Alice Karekezi, *"Lutte contre l'impunité et promotion de la Réconciliation Nationale"* In: Les Juridictions Gacaca et les Processus de Réconciliation Nationale, Cahier, No.3, 2001 Editions, National University of Rwanda, Butare, Rwanda.

²⁰¹. Mbiti, John, *African Religions & Philosophy*, Second Edition, Heinemann Press, Oxford, London, 1990, page 104.

Arthur Molennar supports this view and argues that whereas there is feeling that a crime cannot go unpunished, there is also the principle that a severe penalty can work contrary to the desired reconciliation.²⁰² It seems to me then that the prevalence of restoration over retribution is a concerted effort to support and preserve the social harmony of the community. Constance Morrill's observation, therefore, that those two parties would share a drink and a meal after they have agreed on the terms of reparations,²⁰³ is a symbolic gesture of reconciliation.

A study sponsored by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) on gacaca in 1995-1996 concluded that the traditional gacaca was based on a local proverb "*uruja kujya i Bwami rubanza mu Bagabo*" which literally translates "before a case is brought to the king it must first be sorted out among the wise men."²⁰⁴ This proverb marks the position of gacaca in the social and judicial framework in which it operates. First of all, at one end of the spectrum there were the levels of the family and the village. These were the domains of gacaca where the wise and old men took active roles. As heads of families these men fulfilled the roles of judge and arbitrator. Their job was to sanction the violation of rules shared by the community, with the sole objective of reconciliation through restoring harmony and social order and reintegration of the person who was the source of the disorder.²⁰⁵ Women and children's participation in the gacaca were marginalized but for

²⁰². Molennar, Arthur, *Gacaca, Grassroots Justice After Genocide*. African Studies Center, Vol.77, 2005, 15.

²⁰³. Morrill, Constance, *Reconciliation and the Gacaca*, 2.

²⁰⁴ . Arthur Molenaar, *Gacaca*, 12.

²⁰⁵. Alana Erin Tiemessen, *After Arusha, Gacaca Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, African Studies Quarterly, Vol.8, Issue 1, Fall 2004, page 61.

educational reasons the children would be ordered to attend and listen. The tribunals gave them a chance to learn about good moral behavior.²⁰⁶

Second, at another end of the spectrum there was an *mwami* or king who ruled in a pyramidal structure of chiefs and sub-chiefs with higher judicial structures superior to the village gacaca courts. Since political and judicial powers were not separated the king executed judicial powers. All the chiefs directly served him. The king had a court in which the guardians of the tradition known as *abiru* supported him. The chiefs too had a body of wise men assisting them but the court was only reserved for the king. If the wise men of the gacaca at the village or family level did not manage to solve the problem, it would then be transferred to one of those higher judicial institutions. The process of transferring a case is from where the proverb “before the case is brought to the king it must first be sorted out among the wise men” comes. Thus, problems were first attended to at the local or communal sphere but if the process did not lead to a solution they were sent to higher level judicial institutions.²⁰⁷

As noted earlier, the chief objective of the gacaca in pre-colonial Rwanda was to reconcile the conflicting parties so that the conflict was resolved and harmony would return to the society. Most authors on pre-colonial gacaca have also attributed it with solving inter-familial disputes such as those over land, property rights and inheritance, property damage even the breaking of a commercial

²⁰⁶. Molennar, *Gacaca*, 12.

²⁰⁷. Molennar, *Gacaca*, 12.

covenant such failure to fulfill the terms on which money was borrowed.²⁰⁸

Although this literature is silent about murder cases and how they could be resolved, I think it would be naïve to imagine that these problems never existed. In any case, it was a question on my mind that I hoped to investigate during my research visit. The most important point here though is that in post-genocide Rwanda, the new gacaca is framed in such a way that the pre-colonial objective to reconcile conflicting parties and to restore harmony in society be transposed to the post-war situation so that Hutus and Tutsis that massacred each other in the 1994 genocide are reconciled and live together. Members of the community assemble to discuss the events of the 1994 genocide and to prosecute those who committed these crimes. As to why the administration of justice for these serious crimes in 21 Century Rwanda is entrusted to a pre-colonial concept of justice is one of the reasons that motivated me to travel to the field and find out. In what follows below is what my interviewees think that the gacaca system is a justifiable path to peace and reconciliation in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide.

Interviews: The Justification of the Gacaca

Archbishop Emmanuel Kolini, primate of the Anglican Church of Rwanda and diocesan Bishop of Kigali told me in an interview that there was a serious crisis that came about after so many people implicated in the genocide were arrested and

²⁰⁸. See Karbo Tony & Martha Mutisi, *Psychological Aspects of Post Conflict Reconstruction, Transforming Mindset, The Case of the Gacaca in Rwanda*, A Report prepared for UNDP/BCPR, Accra, Ghana, October 2-4, 2008. Also Cf., Constance F. Morrill, *Reconciliation and the Gacaca*, OJPCR, Vol.1 Fall 1-6, 2004.

imprisoned after the end of the war. The Archbishop said that the gacaca was reincarnated mainly for a pragmatic and ideological reason. From a pragmatic point of view "Prisons were filled up beyond capacity, prisoners were living in very unhealthy conditions."²⁰⁹ This view is supported by Helena Cobban, another researcher who records the gruesome observation of one human rights activist that witnessed the congestion of prisons and the ill health of prisoners at Gitarama Prison and referred to this condition as a defied imagination: "There were three layers of prisoners: at the bottom, lying on the ground, there were the dead, rotting on the muddy floor of the prison. Just above them, crouched down, there were the sick, the wounded, those whose strength had drained away. They were waiting to die. Their bodies had begun to rot and their hope of survival was reduced to a matter of days or even hours. Finally at the top, standing up, there were those who were still healthy. They were standing straight and moving from one foot to the other, half asleep. Why? Simply because that is where they happened to be living. Whenever a man fell over, it was a gift to the survivors because of the extra centimeters of space. I remember a man who was standing on his shins because his feet had rotted away."²¹⁰ Archbishop Kolini thinks, therefore, that these prison conditions urgently necessitated putting in place the use of the gacaca courts to expedite justice but with an intention to decongest the prisons.

Related to the above fact, Archbishop Kolini said that there were not enough lawyers to handle cases involving between 120,000- 130,000 prisoners arrested

²⁰⁹. Kolini, Archbishop, *Interview*, Kigali, June 15, 2010.

²¹⁰. Helena, Cobban, *Amnesty After Atrocity? Healing Nations after Genocide and War Crimes*, Paradigm Publishers, London, 2007, page 19.

under suspicion of committing crimes during the genocide. "The country's judicial system had been destroyed during the war in terms of personnel and infrastructure. Judges became a primary target during the war to the extent that 244 out of the original 750 in the whole country were killed during the early stages of the genocide while many of the survivors fled into exile."²¹¹ Cobban, another researcher adds more explanation that as late as 1997 before the gacaca was in place, the courts in Rwanda were left to function with only 50 lawyers and with a notable absence of infrastructure and administration, specifically Courts of Appeal in all the twelve counties.²¹² So what happened was that these cases would be referred to the Tribunal penal international pour le Rwanda (TPIR), also known as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) based in Arusha, Tanzania, but according to Archbishop Kolini, "it was a very slow process requiring that key witnesses be transported from Rwanda to Arusha."²¹³

The Archbishop continued to say that many witnesses, also survivors, especially women felt uncomfortable with the methods of the Tribunal. The Tribunal would ask them to retell their stories of rape or those stories about the murder of their families in the presence of perpetrators. They would break down during the Tribunal's sessions due to the psychological and social trauma. "These experiences reawakened memories of the genocide, renewed grief, pain, rage, outrage, and hatred among the people of Rwanda. There were renewed fear and security concerns among the witnesses since some of the perpetrators were still alt

²¹¹. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²¹². Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²¹³. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

large. All these circumstances seemed to put the Rwandan community at odds with the ICTR and its activities, a condition that necessitated having an alternative form of justice suitable for the people. Our National University of Butare made a study about the gacaca but consulting all the people including prisoners, it was then presented to Parliament for debate about it, and it was found out to be highly favored than the Arusha Tribunal.”²¹⁴

But there were also other voices outside the Rwandan community that reacted negatively toward the activities and procedures of the Arusha Tribunal in support of Rwanda’s complaints. In 1996, just two years after the genocide had ended, veteran human rights activist Andre Sibomana told the following to his interviewers about the Arusha Tribunal. “The main effect of the international community, or rather the countries within it has been to save face and give the impression to the public that the crime they watched without intervening would not go unpunished...I have met some of the ICTR officials; I am amazed at their incompetence. They are very intelligent people, but completely incapable of carrying out research. They do not speak Kinyarwanda (language of Rwanda)-which is understandable but nor do they know how to employ competent interpreters. I agreed to talk to the ICTR investigators. I spent a lot of time with them. When they presented me with an account of our meetings translated from Kinyarwanda into English and transcribed into French, there was only one remote link between the text and the subject matter of our discussions in French. I was angry with them with this flippant attitude and I refused to sign what had been intended to be my

²¹⁴. Kolini, June 15, 2010

disposition. Do you think the investigators tried to rectify the mistakes? They simply put me in the category of those who refused to cooperate with ICTR. That was the last straw. They are incapable of approaching those who lived through the genocide. They do not ask the right questions. People are offended by their attitudes and their discourse. Rwanda had invested a lot in ICTR. They are very disappointed.²¹⁵

When I asked Bishop Hakolimana, his answer resonated all the above. “There was a feeling that the Tribunal officials neither understood the language of the victims nor did they ask the right questions. Other people here in Rwanda thought that the Tribunal’s efforts were harming peace and reconciliation and that the United Nations had put the Tribunal in place to cover up for the shame of the UN for failing to stop the 1994 genocide. In fact in February 2004 the Arusha Tribunal acquitted two senior people well known for organizing genocide in a place called Changuu. As a result, about ten thousand people demonstrated over this act. The people in Rwanda were following well what was going on in Arusha and they were angry. Certainly this acquittal was not good for peace and reconciliation.”²¹⁶

Rwanda then made a strong case to the International community that in order to forgive many ordinary people who were congested in prisons, those who organized them for genocide and were held up in the Tribunal’s detention had first to be in Rwanda where they committed the crimes and be prosecuted under Rwanda’s law. Therefore, according to archbishop Kolini there were three scenarios that necessitated the reincarnation of the gacaca. First, there was the scenario

²¹⁵ . Helena Cobban, *Amnesty After Atrocity? Healing Nations after Genocide and War Crimes*, 2007, 53-54.

²¹⁶. Caleb Hakolimana, Bishop, *Interview*, Kigali, June 18, 2010

where prisons were congested and prisoners were in un healthy conditions and some of them dying. Second, there was a situation where judges had been killed in the genocide and a few remaining could not deal with the enormous caseload of the suspects. Third, the Arusha Tribunal seemed to be at odds with Rwandan interests by the way the ICTR officials handled victims of the genocide.

All the factors above necessitated reincarnating the gacaca as an indigenous mechanism to speed up the trails at the community level where the crimes were committed. According to Kolini, the gacaca would mitigate the failures of the Arusha Tribunal because expediting cases meant that prisoners would be prosecuted under the gacaca courts, those found with lighter cases would be released immediately and be re-united to their families and communities. In the meantime prisons would be decongested.²¹⁷ Kolini continued to explain that the decision to launch the gacaca courts was important otherwise “failure to do so would give credence to some of the already made allegations especially by Human Rights groups that the new Tutsi dominated government was deliberately allowing or rather using abject prison conditions as a weapon to kill Hutu prisoners for their previously alleged role in massacring Tutsis.”²¹⁸

From the ideological perspective, Archbishop Kolini explained that contrary to Western Law or European Law that focuses on the justice of retribution; “traditional gacaca was reincarnated with the view to promote culturally relevant approaches of reconciling Hutus and Tutsis from the long-standing issues of hatred

²¹⁷. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²¹⁸. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

and revenge.”²¹⁹ In other words, the Archbishop was telling me that if I were to juxtapose the principles and procedures of the gacaca with those of the Arusha Tribunal or ICTR in a cultural context, I would find normative differences. I would find that the norms underlying the gacaca reflect cultural traditions and the characteristics of restorative justice whereas those of the ICTR are purely punitive. In his view, since Rwanda is a small country whereby it is inevitable that survivors and perpetrators of the genocide have to live together, they would rather reconcile their differences and this opportunity is provided by the gacaca system of justice.

When I referenced my question *visa avis* the scholarly observations made by Mahmood Mamdani that the ideologically poisoned colonial past between Hutu’s and Tutsis gave birth to a genocide offspring of 1994,²²⁰ the archbishop agreed to this fact and said, “Unfortunately, it is true that this country was built on a shaky foundation of ethnic division. By the way what does the Bible say? It says that a house built on a sand foundation will not stand the test of harsh weather. It is an important thing about the current gacaca system lays a foundation that would give Rwanda an opportunity to address historical problems such as the need for equal sharing of the country’s power and economic resources.”²²¹ He went on to illustrate this point by injecting his own experience of the gacaca in the interview. “I once listened to a perpetrator give testimony at a gacaca meeting that he was told to kill a Tutsi and then he would be given money. So the problems of this young man were economic and not political. We have to use the gacaca and even go beyond it to

²¹⁹. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²²⁰. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 130-131.

²²¹. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

address the issues such as poverty and economic empowerment, education for all, employment for all, good water for all and so on. I mean all those issues that once they are not there or if they are there they are in the hands of a few and people may want to fight over them. Of course the gacaca meetings had to immediately deal with genocide issues such as who killed so and so? Where was he killed? Who saw it and then make a decision or recommendations. At the same time our society knows that these problems have been historical and discussing them is part of seeking lasting peace.”²²²

The archbishop believes that a community, which has been characterized with a history of mistrust and animosity among its people, needs a mechanism that should reconstruct its social and psychological capital. “Such a mechanism is found in this indigenous and form of restorative justice that we have in the gacaca”²²³. He said that he initially supported the view that every young man who is economically productive but is in prison ought to be released early in order to produce for the wellbeing of his family and country. Staying in prison could mean that the government would waste resources on them. Besides, their families could be devastated too by turning wives into widows and children into orphans. He said, “I would not like to have a situation where genocide and imprisonment were creating a double toll effect on the social and economic spheres of our society and I think our government made the right decision to reincarnate the gacaca.”²²⁴

²²². Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²²³. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²²⁴. Kolini, June 15, 2010

The archbishop continued to say that the previous (Hutu) government had marshaled all its resources including masses in Rwanda's countryside and mobilized them to kill in groups so that none would be individually held responsible for the genocide at the end of the day. This is a view also supported by Shema Rutagengwa.²²⁵ Kolini said that it is very difficult to do justice to a community where it is believed that almost everyone participated in these crimes. "Do you take to prison all the people of the country? Do you pay them back in equal terms? And what do you pay any way? Kill them all? With whom do you replace them? If we want to achieve ultimate reconciliation and if Rwanda is to realize sustainable peace in the aftermath of these crimes, we must engage massive participation of the population in the reconciliation process, after all these crimes were massively committed here in Rwanda."²²⁶

I asked him to explain the legitimacy of the gacaca courts in handling mass murder cases especially in the view that there is not a pre-colonial precedent for genocide. He said that although there is not a pre-colonial precedent for mass murder and what the gacaca could eventually have done about it, cases of murder were those situations in which the *omwami* (king) had a direct role to perform. "Obviously, if a murder took place in the community, the community would sit and determine the circumstances under which that person died. In most cases, the community would come up with their own resolutions and resolving the case would not be complicated especially if the culpable could make a confession followed by an

²²⁵. Rutagengwa, Claude Shema, *Gacaca Jurisdictions in Rwanda*, <http://www.author-me.com/nonfiction/gacacajurisdictions.html> (website visited on November 6, 2010).

²²⁶. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

apology and after both the offender's family and that of the victim agreed to the terms of the penalty. I must say that I have no knowledge about murder with impunity in pre-colonial times. However, if the case became unresolved even after the community had established the facts under which that person was murdered, it could be referred to the king. The king would make a decision based on the facts he got from the elders, and that is why we have our proverb, "*uruja kuja I Bwami, rubanza mu Bagabo*,"²²⁷ (lit. before a case is taken to the king it has first to be deliberated among the wise men), also see above. But now we do not have a king and the supreme powers of the land are invested in the legislative arm of government.

According to the Archbishop, he did not see any contradiction between the principle roles of the king in pre-colonial times and the role of the modern state in as far as the function of the gacaca is concerned. The post-conflict Rwanda enacted the gacaca law to give the indigenous courts the mandate to deal with cases of the genocide but also to allow these courts to refer the difficult cases to the government. For instance, cases referred to as *category two*²²⁸ are not prosecuted by the gacaca. In these cases, the role of the meetings is only to gather testimonies about who

²²⁷. Kolini, June 15, 2010

²²⁸. The first category comprises those who planned, organized and lead the genocide and those who acted in positions of authority to orchestrate murders. When they are convicted of the crimes, they get a life sentence in prison. This group falls under the jurisdiction of the Arusha Tribunal or ICTR. The second category are those accused of voluntary homicide or acts against persons that resulted in death. They are accused of inflicting wounds intentionally to kill or committed certain violent crimes that did not result in death. This category falls under the jurisdiction of national courts. Category three includes those who committed violent crimes without intent to kill, such as those who stole property. These fall under the jurisdiction of the gacaca.

organized, who gave instructions, who gave materials and eventually those who are convicted of these crimes are or have been given life sentences, not by the gacaca but by the state of Rwanda."²²⁹ He said that in pre-colonial times, problems were solved at community level because that is where they happened. This time, however, genocide affected the whole country and so it is relevant that the whole community of Rwanda get involved in seeking solutions.²³⁰

When I asked him about the function of prisons vis-a-vis the reconciliation process most especially in view that pre-colonial procedures did not include imprisonment, he both regretted but thinks prisons serve a certain purpose. "Prisons are one of the undesirable colonial legacies but important in our society. Our societies have to accept and cope up with some of these legacies. Unfortunately we must have prisons because they keep wrong elements away from harming the innocent."²³¹.

When I later on met Bishop John Rucyahana he reiterated the same position, "there are certain things we have inherited from the Europeans including the language (English) that you and I are now speaking. These have to stay here with us. Imprisonment has to stay with us but I think it has to aim at rehabilitating humans and not to make them into hardhearted criminals. Prisons should also not be used to settle political scores; I mean there are cases where political leaders put their

²²⁹. Kolini, June 15, 2010.

²³⁰. Kolini, June 15, 2010

²³¹. Kolini, June 15, 2010

opponents behind bars instead of accepting the challenge to discuss the problems at hand. I think that is not right.”²³²

I interviewed Bishop John Rucyahana after his name was strongly suggested to me by the Archbishop of Rwanda, the Right Reverend Emmanuel Kolini. Rucyahana is the Bishop of Ruhengeri Diocese but also holds a presidential appointment and is the leader of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC). The President of Rwanda, His Excellency Major General Paul Kagame, appointed him to this position. Bishop Rucyahana is not only a church leader but he also oversees all the efforts including the gacaca that link with government policies that are geared toward peace and reconciliation. I was interested in asking for his opinion on how he thinks the gacaca is dealing with the Hutus and Tutsis deep-seated hatred alleged to have emanated from the colonial period. How did this hatred come about? Following below is a brief historical analysis of research on Rwanda and I wanted Bishop Rucyahana to “inject” his own opinions on this subject since he is the person on the ground. Later on I wanted him to tell me how the gacaca is dealing with this situation.

From the scholarship contributions already made by Mahmood Mamdani,²³³ Botte Roger,²³⁴ Rene Lemarchand,²³⁵ Jacques Maquet,²³⁶ Catharine Newbury,²³⁷

²³². Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

²³³. His important works on Rwanda include: *When Victims Become Killers, Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 2001; “From Conquest to Consent Is the Basis of State Formation: Reflections on Rwanda.” *New Left Review*, No. 216 (March/April 1996); “Babu: A Personal Tribute.” *Review of African Political Economy*, London, No.19, 1996; *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976; *Citizen and Subject, Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Gerald Prunier,²³⁸ and Philip Reyntjens,²³⁹ there is a general consensus that the onset of the colonial enterprise in Rwanda upset the existing social order because the colonialists governed on the principle of divide and rule. Other scholars like Eugene Haguma have gone on to argue that the cause of the 1994 Rwanda genocide can be traced from the 1959 revolution.²⁴⁰

Of all the above, it is Professor Mahmood Mamdani who is more explicit in illustrating that during the entire colonial rule of Rwanda, first by the Germans and later by the Belgians respectively, colonialists privileged the Tutsi minority over Hutu majority, and made the former to bitterly repress the latter. The Hutu's were

²³⁴. See Rwanda and Burundi, 1889-1930, Chronology of a Slow Assassination, Part 1, *International Journal of African historical Studies* 18, No.1 (1985): 53-59; Rwanda and Burundi, 1889-1930, Chronology of a Slow Assassination, Part 2, *International Journal of African historical Studies*, 18, No.2 (1985): 289-314;

²³⁵. See her work on: *Rwanda and Burundi*, New York: Praeger, 1970; "Recent History." In section on "Rwanda," in *Africa South of the Sahara*, 1974, London, Europa Publications, 1975; "Review of Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960*." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 24-(1990): 473-475; "Rwanda: The Rationality of Genocide." *Issue* 23, No.2 (1995), African Studies Association of USA;

²³⁶. See *The Premise of Inequality in Rwanda: A Study of Political Relations in a Central African Kingdom*, London: Oxford university Press, 1961;

²³⁷. See her works on: *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989; "Ubureetwa and Thangata: Catalysts to Peasant Political Consciousness in Rwanda and in Malawi." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14, No.1 (1980); "Ethnicity in Rwanda: The Case of Kinyange." *Africa* 48, No.1 (1978).

²³⁸. See *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide, 1959-1994*, London: Hurst & Co., 1995.

²³⁹. See *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise: Rwanda, Burundi, 1988-1994*, Paris: Karthala, 1994.

²⁴⁰. See his work: "The Rwandese Crisis: A Political Economy of Genocide." Symposium on Interface, Dialogue, and Co-Operation between Government and NGO's for Popular Participation in National Reconstruction, Conflict and Psycho-Social Trauma Management. Organized Jointly by Africa Humanitarian Action and UN Economic Commission for Africa, Kigali, February 28, 1995.

subjected into servitude also known as *Ubureetwa*.²⁴¹ However, by the time of independence, Belgium had started considering the powerful but minority Tutsi a liability: "Belgium put the country under the command of Colonel Guy Logiest...who began to replace Tutsi with Hutu chiefs, thus shepherding a revolution against what had hitherto been the colonial power's own local authorities."²⁴²

Mamdani goes on to say that the powers of independence were given to the Hutu who were formerly repressed by the Tutsi under the indirect rule of the Belgians. Perplexing as it sounds, the Belgians seemed to have orchestrated this move with a desire to continue to maintain some form of control and to gain from the former colony. This time they would achieve their objective under a majority rule of the Hutu. Unfortunately the majority Hutu did not seize this chance as an opportunity to advance human rights or the equal sharing of economic resources once denied them. Rather, it became a moment to turn brutality and hostilities against their former oppressors, a very unfortunate scenario described by Mamdani as "the gateway to a blood-soaked political future for Rwanda."²⁴³

When I met the Right Reverend Bishop Rucyahana, I asked him about how in his opinion the gacaca system is working to eradicate the attitudes of hate and revenge between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups that is alleged to have been started by the colonialists. He said, "Yes, the chief weapon of genocide is hatred. Hatred is often a product of political corruption and selfishness combined with a

²⁴¹. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, pp 144-115

²⁴². Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 124.

²⁴³. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 130.

form of prejudice and together they breed genocide.”²⁴⁴ He further explained, “your readers need to understand how the Belgians orchestrated this evil situation after the Germans had set the ball rolling but lost the colony after World War 1. The German authorities had made a racial categorization of the population of our people as Tutsi, Hutu. They said that the Tutsi were more organized since their *mwami* (king) was a strong one. The Germans, however, did not see a lot of economic or strategic interests in this land locked country and decided to govern it remotely under the minority Tutsi monarch. So they strengthened his position and facilitated many Tutsi people against the other groups but just out of German economic interests. However, the German Missionaries maintained their presence in Rwanda and to a large extent could give all the needed information to the colonizers back home.”²⁴⁵

He continued, “like the Germans, when the Belgians arrived at the end of World War 1, they continued the indirect rule under the Tutsi but made it worse by issuing identity cards to all the people according to the former category made by the Germans [Tutsi, Hutu or Twa]. They added a structure to this category based on how much wealth they owned. For instance, a family that owned ten or more heads of

²⁴⁴. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

²⁴⁵. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010. Also Cf., Joseph Sebarenzi, *A Journey of Transformation: God Sleeps in Rwanda*, Atria Books, London, 2009, pp.1-13; Gerald Prunier, “Rwandese Society and the Colonial Impact: The Making of a Cultural Mythology (1894-1959): In *The Rwanda Crisis, History of Genocide*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995; Paul Magnarella, “Comprehending the Rwanda Genocide.” In *Justice in Africa, Rwanda’s Genocide, Its Courts and the UN Criminal Tribunal*, Ashgate Press, Brookfield, USA, 2000; Mahmood Mamdani, “The Origins of Hutu and Tutsi.” In *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2001; Rene Lemarchand, “Rwanda.” In *Rwanda and Burundi*, Praeger Publishers, New York, Washington, London, 1970.

cattle was identified as Tutsi and those with less as Hutu while the Twa were literally identified with nothing except with the activity hunting. The Belgians were also fascinated by the physical differences between the groups such as their height, their weight, their eye color, the width of their noses and even the texture of their hair. They determined that the Tutsis were more European (taller, thinner and lighter skinned) in nature, nobler and more intelligent than the Hutu and therefore the natural rulers of the country. Using this stereotypical rationale they stripped the Hutu any authority including all they had before colonialism. They gave every power to the Tutsi²⁴⁶. Belgium invested more money in the colony thus expected returns. In their need for cheap labor to boost their capital investments, they subjected the Hutu and Twa groups into servitude and this was brutally enforced by the Tutsis. The Hutus developed an inferior but angry psyche toward the Tutsis and once in a while they would revolt and kill Tutsis."²⁴⁷

The Bishop further illustrated that the Belgians saw the much smaller Tutsis as more socially organized hence a possibility of championing their colonial interests, and in a colonial style they put in place a divide and indirect rule mechanism by giving privileges to Tutsi so that they would act as its enforcers against the rest of the groups especially the Hutus. However, during decolonization of Africa especially after Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania got their independence, the Tutsi annoyed the Belgians by making demands for a quick exit in order to give them independence. The Belgians were so up that with no shame at all they started to shift their favors toward the previous unprivileged Hutus to the extent that by

²⁴⁶. Also see Joseph Sebarenzi, *A Journey of Transformation*, 12-13

²⁴⁷. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

independence time, Hutus were seen as “top dog” and they (Hutus) started carrying out a campaign of anti-Tusti revenge, motivated by the hatred that they still felt at the hands of Tusti leadership while working as Belgian’s enforcers. Apparently this revenge has been a vicious cycle done with impunity with various events attached to it leading to the 1994 genocide.”²⁴⁸

He went on to say, “So what do we do? One of the important goals of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission is to de-mythologize the venomous Hutu/Tutsi divisive racial attitude that has caused this country a tragedy. I mean, the genocide should reveal to you about how deep the country of Rwanda sunk in ethnic hatred. But we speak the same language and we have the same cultures. I think it is total madness that people who have so much in common to share and live with should brutally hate each other to this extent. So we have education and literacy programs for sensitizing our public against the causes of division.”²⁴⁹ Bishop Rucyahana thinks that after the country has been mismanaged by the politics of deception, politics of stating that one group is better than the other or that those who do not look like them should not be part of their business, “it is now time to set up policies with national interests for the people of Rwanda but not for some groups of people in Rwanda. For example, poverty and failed development made Rwanda to become easily susceptible to genocide. You know poverty creates a mindset of racial superiority which can result into hatred and violence when certain criteria come

²⁴⁸. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010; Cf., Mahmood Mamdani, “ The Social Revolution of 1959”: In *When Victims Become Killers*, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp103-157; Also, Helena Cobban, “Rwanda”: In *Amnesty After Atrocity? Healing After Genocide Crimes* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 33.

²⁴⁹. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

into play.”²⁵⁰ He agrees that the country’s political foundation was built on what he referred as “colonial falsification of our identities but now experience shows that we have to stand up and together we reject that falsification.”²⁵¹

Bishop Rucyahana thinks that the gacaca process is important in peace making because it addresses the immediate needs of making reconciliation. It unearths the truth about what happened and it helps the people to overcome denial and to move toward repentance. “The chief objective is restore the responsibility of justice and order to the community. You see they begin by gathering information from whatever source is available. They hold meetings in the open where everyone can attend and ask questions. Both those who ask and those who give information are from that same community and the people will tell exactly what happened. No one can conceal what he did. For example, one might say, “I only looted.” But someone else in the crowd will say, “No, I was with you and we killed so- and so together. I hit him on the head and you speared him.” Perpetrators are thus made to account for their crimes and once this has happened they are also given an opportunity to repent. If someone is convicted and sent to jail, when he returns that community has the responsibility of restoring him. They will accept him as their own and if needs help him in areas such as to rebuilt his house or feed him or his family until he is able to stand on his own feet. In other words it is a community judging their own and it is the same community that will welcome him back after he is released from jail. By allowing the people in the community to question a person

²⁵⁰. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010; Also see his book: *The Bishop of Rwanda, Finding Forgiveness amidst a Pile of Bones*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2007), 204.

²⁵¹. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010

suspected of perpetrating genocide, anger and resentment are greatly relieved because they have been expressed. In addition when the survivors get to know who killed their relatives and where their dead bodies were thrown, the big mystery, that of never knowing who did it and whether their loved ones were buried or not starts to be solved. It is no longer a burden and the process moves to the next level of healing. When the offender is truthful, comes forward and asks the victim for forgiveness and as hard as it is when victims accept to forgive, both victim and offender start to heal. It is not easy but we think this is the right way for Rwanda. We think than an unforgiving heart is recipe for more conflict. ”²⁵²

The Bishop thinks that even if there is a quest for justice, it should not be the justice of retribution as in the sense of the western world: “Reconciliation is about building unity after so much violence has taken place. This demands sacrifice. When we ask a victim to pardon the perpetrator, we are asking him or her to accept that he or she has lost everything even any moral advantage he may have. We understand justice means that the guilty one should be punished and the punishment should be commensurate to the crime. But what punishment in Rwanda can be commensurate to the crimes the people committed? Can one kill a million people for participating in genocide? What is justice anyway? Does it not mean to keep peace? First of all, let us first bring peace that we think the gacaca can help us to build especially if we are able to adhere to its principles of reconciliation. After that let us keep the peace. To keep peace means that we should not be “just.” Let us look into the eyes of the child of a killer, recover him, rehabilitating him and give

²⁵². Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

him his rights. If it is an orphan from the genocide let us as a community support him. If perpetrators are willing to accept their crimes and ask for forgiveness, let us not give them what is equal to their crimes. To me that is justice but it is not equal to what one has lost. Mercy is more than justice.²⁵³

The Reverend Father Dominique, a Roman Catholic priest and the Administrator at Cathedrale Sainte-Michelle downtown Kigali, applauded the gacaca for how it minimized even eliminated rumors and false accusations. “There were people who naturally did not like their neighbors and then decided to spread rumors and false accusations against them. They would come up with statements such as, “I was told that so and so killed people or I heard that so and so killed people from there”. These accusations were quite dangerous in an emotionally charged environment at the end of the genocide. As a result so many people were falsely imprisoned for a long time. After the gacaca law was implemented prisoners would be taken before a gacaca meeting of their communities because they are supposed to go where the alleged crimes should have occurred. But their dossiers’ would be empty and the people of the community would say that nothing bad they know that so and so could have committed. Their accusers would not come forward because their allegations would not be collaborated. Justice officials told us that 12% of prisoners in Rwanda fell under this category of false accusations. The gacaca helped in eliminating rumors because if a person said that he heard or he was told that so and so committed crimes, the gacaca court would ask him to say what he exactly saw and not what he heard, or to mention the name of the person who told

²⁵³. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

him what he heard. It was also the same story for those who were motivated by greed and made accusations by exaggerating the size of the stolen or damaged property. Some gacaca meetings discovered some of the accusers never owned property before but they wanted to take advantage of the reparations program that the government put in place for victims.”²⁵⁴

Andrea Bishimo, a proprietor of a barber business in downtown Kigali expressed that the gacaca has set a path on which “we know that when people meet, they are not supposed to fight but talk about peace and reconciliation. But the talk does not end there. It is on the radio, television, newspapers, on the streets and so on. Okay, we still know that things are not perfect but at least there are things happening now here in Rwanda that I did not know about when I was a kid. For me I was born in exile. My parents had escaped death during the violence of 1959. As a Tutsi kid in exile, I was always told that the Hutu are bad people and I should be afraid of them. I later on discovered that Hutu people could never trust a Tutsi and always think of them as power hungry, *orunva*? (“You see” or “You hear”). Each people had his or her attitudes. But now gacaca has set a precedent to the extent that after people have listened to what happened through gacaca, they are free to continue talking and discussing these issues. The gacaca has reminded us that fighting and killing should not be there. These days if people hate you they will not say it. They will not call you *inyenzi*²⁵⁵ or cockroach. The talk here in Rwanda is

²⁵⁴. Reverend Father Dominique, *Interview*, Kigali, July 1, 2010

²⁵⁵. *Inyenzi*, literally, meaning Cockroaches was a term initially used both within and outside of Rwanda to refer to small scale, Tutsi guerrilla fighting units trained and organized outside Rwanda and varying in size from about six to twelve men in the early 1960s. During the 1994 genocide, the perpetrators used the term *inyenzi* in a

about reconciliation and gacaca is at the center of it. If lack of education, lack of a job or failure to share political power were the basis for genocide, the current government is interested in unity, peace, reconciliation and development. We know that change of attitude is not easy especially among the old people but the young generation is thinking positively. We know that we still have to work hard on these issues but gacaca has given us a starting point.²⁵⁶

The gacaca system of justice, as good as it sounds has not failed to generate criticism particularly on what other researchers such as Gerald Prunier²⁵⁷, Mary Grey²⁵⁸, Rene Lemarchand²⁵⁹, Constance F. Morrill²⁶⁰, and Helena Cobban²⁶¹ have generally described as the “Victor’s Justice” or as a “polarizing system”. All they are pointing out is that it is true that when the Tutsi dominated military, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded Rwanda from Uganda, the Hutus inside Rwanda started the genocide and targeted the Tutsi who had been living inside Rwanda together with their sympathizers no matter whether they were also Hutus. At the same time, the Tutsi military were able to kill on two fronts. First, they killed at the

very derogatory manner over national radio and newspapers to incite the public to kill Tutsis in a way one would kill cockroaches. At the moment it sounds like an abomination in Rwanda.

²⁵⁶. Andrea Bishimo, *Interview*, Kigali, July 6, 2010.

²⁵⁷. See: *The Rwanda Crisis: A History of a Genocide*, 1959-194. London: Hurst & Co., 1995, pp 321-328.

²⁵⁸. See: Mary Grey, *To Rwanda and Back, Liberation and Reconciliation*. (Wiltshire: The Cromwell Press, 2007),85.

²⁵⁹. See: “Patterns of State Collapse and Reconstruction in Central Africa: Reflections of the Crisis in the Great Lakes.” *African Studies Quarterly*: Vol., 1, Issue 3, 1997

²⁶⁰. See: Reconciliation and the Gacaca: The Perceptions and Peace-Building Potential of Rwandan Youth Detainees, *OJPCR: The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution* 6.1 Fall: 1-66 (2004).

²⁶¹. See: Helena Cobban, *Amnesty After Atrocity? Healing Nations After Genocide and War*, 69

war frontline. Second, whenever they reached liberated areas and found out that people of their ethnic groups or even their relatives had been targeted, they killed again this time in reprisals. When it came to the making of justice after the Tutsis had captured power from the defeated Hutus, Tutsis became Victims and Hutus became the perpetrators. That is why everyone who is accused of genocide and is in prison is a Hutu. This situation has therefore *problematized* the gacaca by linking it to what Alan Erin Tiemessen has referred to as the Tutsi Ethnocracy, a process of legitimizing Tutsi authority,²⁶² and would not want to hand in their own to face justice.

When I asked this question to a respondent who described herself as a Tutsi and that she was born and raised in exile, she requested for anonymity and had the following to say: “ Do you think there is no truth in that? That is an issue that my cousins (also Tutsi) and I have never agreed on whenever we get together like during a wedding. They never went to exile and they were up set that we people in exile caused them trouble. They say that nothing terrible had happened to them before the invasion and we in exile are responsible. They had lived and intermarried with the Hutu and that genocide could not have happened if it were not because of us fighting from exile to take the country. They say that we also killed and we should stop saying that the Hutu are the only ones who did. They say that so and so, a Hutu, was still here and alive when the *inkontanyi* (RPF Army) arrived. But they took him and we have never seen him again. So why do you say that it is the Hutus who only killed? Why not bring the *inkontanyi* to the gacaca if it is for all the people of

²⁶². Alana Erin Tiemessen, “After Arusha: Gacaca justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda.” *African Studies Quarterly*: Vol., 8, Issue 1, Fall 2004, p 66-67.

Rwanda?” When I asked her what response she usually gives to her cousins, she replied, “ *Ai we, ebintu byirwanda birakomeye cyane, nihabwobishobora,*” which literally means, “ Ooh you see, Rwandan issues are very difficult.”

When I asked Bishop Hakolimana he rather framed his response in a biblical perspective. He said, “in principle the gacaca has the functional role of equally disciplining every member of the society who has acted contrary to what the people think is in order. For me it is like in ancient Israel when parents could take their rebellious sons to the elders at the gate for discipline. Cf., Deut 21:18. Even if the outcome would be undesirable (stoning to death) to the extent that no parent would wish to have their son taken to the gate for discipline, the most important thing is that every rebellious son could taken to face the justice of the elders at the gate; It was not a selective method where some rebellious sons could face discipline while other could not because it was done for the respect of Yahweh in the community of Israel. So if the gacaca is to be for the respect of the people of Rwanda in the interest of peace and harmony, we should not be hearing such complaints that there are people who face the gacaca and others do not. If they are innocent, let them still face the people because evidence has to be collaborated and then the people of the community will exonerate them.”²⁶³

Hakolimana thinks that some people were suspicious about the government’s role not that it sanctioned the use of the gacaca but perhaps that it “manipulated” the system in order to make it suitable for the post-genocide situation. He thinks that the government can gain credibility by having an internal

²⁶³. Caleb Hakolimana, Bishop, *Interview*, Kigali, June 18, 2010.

self-criticism that will fight the vices it claims it fought against. "Otherwise I think it is a dangerous precedent to preach the gospel for justice yet you let the culpable go free"²⁶⁴ Bishop John Rucyahana later on added that the changes were inevitable. For instance, "women were never part of the *inyangamugayo* on the gacaca but now they are and have made it easy for women survivors to tell their stories knowing that there are people who understand their situation."²⁶⁵

After this set of interviews my sense about the gacaca was thus: It is a community based restorative justice system co-opted from the pre-colonial past whose current objective is to solve collectively the problem of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. People of the community gather in an open place, hear testimonies in favor of or against the suspects and make decisions according to the new rules that were modeled by the government. There are perpetrators whose judgments are made by the gacaca courts but there are perpetrators whose cases are referred to the government. Perpetrators and victims all agree to the terms of making peace and rehabilitation.

I had an understanding that the people of Rwanda had preferred the gacaca system to the International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda in Arusha (ICTR) to prosecute the perpetrators of the genocide for a number of reasons. First, the ICTR was very far away in Arusha in Tanzania making its methods of investigations and the handling of witnesses completely detached from the villages where these crimes were committed. Second, ICTR was a very slow process requiring that witnesses be transported to Tanzania and there were no posttraumatic stress facilities for those

²⁶⁴. Hakolimana, June 18, 2010

²⁶⁵. Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

who broke down as a result of the genocide memories. Third, Rwandan prisons were filled to maximum capacity and were in abject conditions resulting in several deaths of prisoners.

In view that most Rwandan judges had been killed during the genocide and there were very few judges available to handle the caseloads of the perpetrators, there was an urgent need to have in place a justice system to decongest the prisons. Last but not least, the people of Rwanda felt that violence and revenge had affected them for a long time and will continue to do so unless there is a willingness to alter the status quo. There was a sense therefore that if this has to happen, there must be peace and reconciliation and that the gacaca provides a platform for that. My next step therefore was to attend a gacaca court and have a personal experience on how all the above come into play. Following below therefore is an account of the gacaca hearing in Rwamagana on July 4, 2010.

Setting the Stage for the Gacaca Court

Denise Bikesha, the Executive Secretary of the National Service for Gacaca Courts, had told me that the earliest court scheduled during the time of my research visit would be at Nyarugali in Rwamagana. It would be the 19th last case of the 10,000 total gacaca courts set up at the end of 2002 in the whole of Rwanda. It was not only one of the last but one of the most difficult. In another words, it was falling in the category of cases where the gacaca would gather testimonies and give recommendations to the National court. I was told that the structure of this meeting

was identical to all the other courts that had taken place in the country namely; the hearing must start at 9:00 am with a column of not less than 100 people. That there must be at least 15 of the 19 required *inyangamugayo* (judges) present at the hearing. Once the column of 100 people is realized, the leader of the judges will give a word of welcome to the assembly and then invite the whole assembly to stand up to observe two minutes of silence in memory of the victims of the genocide and to think about national reconciliation.

After the people have observed the silence, the leading judge reads the rules of procedure to make sure nothing falls out of place. The rules include the following: Observe maximum silence and no talking without first raising up a hand and be given permission. No one should interrupt the judges or witness whether you like what they say or not. If you are not given a chance to talk, do not force yourself in the conversation. Every one is welcome to tell the truth. If one refuses to reveal information or to lie, it is according to article 32 of the gacaca law punishable with one-three years of imprisonment. Witnesses must not mix with other witnesses who have not yet testified. Witnesses must also not listen to what the court is saying. Personally I was neither allowed to record voices nor to take photographs. However, I was allowed to write as much as I needed. I was informed though that because people in the villages prefer to work in their fields in the early morning hours, I should not be surprised if I saw the crowd of the assembly get bigger by late afternoon.

I arrived at Nyarugali with Evaristo my interpreter who speaks good English, Kinyarwanda and is fluent in French. It had taken me a lot of cost to get him through

the National Gacaca Office. Together, we arrive at 8:45 am with Erasmus my driver who fluent in Kinyarwanda, French and Swahili. He comes from Kibuye and both his parents had been killed in the genocide. I could see four prisoners, all men in their late twenties or early thirties in pink guarded by a policeman near the place of the expected meeting. One of the prisoners is drinking water from a bottle and is talking to a woman.

Safari, a Hutu and a former commune leader is accused of the death of two people namely Mutabarura and Eldfonce Mutabazi both Tutsi who were living in the neighborhood. Witnesses include Diane Mukaaka, Mutabarura's daughter and Maria Gollet, sister of Eldfonce Mutabazi. It is alleged that Safari was quite wealthy and influential before and during the genocide. Married to a Tutsi wife who strongly supported him against accusations of killing other Tutsis, Safari first eluded arrest but now is in prison. He might be sentenced to life in prison if found guilty because all the witnesses say they did not see him kill but was the force behind the deaths. He apparently denies everything but some evidence is very incriminatory. I am told that other additional witnesses will be brought in to testify as required including the other prisoners I had seen in pink prison ware.

Diana Mukaaka, the daughter of Mutabarura (the deceased) testified that her father was there during the war. She said that three men came and took her father (broke down in the middle of her testimony). She said that one of the three asked for his *endangamuntu* (identity card) and my father showed it to him because he always carried it. She continued, "*ejho nabonye oyo mugabo*" or yesterday she saw that man who asked for her father's identity card. She said that she know them because they

were neighbors. However, she could not recall all the three except the one she saw the previous day. She thinks Safari knew where they took him because he was the leader of the commune. Safari categorically denied any knowledge of the man or death Diana was talking about.

The second testimony, very incriminatory to Safari was given by Maria Gollet, sister of Eldfonce Mutabazi (deceased). It was alleged that when the killings started, Mutabazi sought refuge at Safari's home because he knew him as a good man who was also able to protect him against the *interahamwe* (genocide militias also known as *genocidaires*) killers. Safari said that he did not know see that man. Maria Gollet told the assembly that after the genocide had stopped she came looking for her brother who she knew that was already dead. She had been told that Safari knew about it but Safari denied everything. She later was told that there was a body suspected to be of the man she was looking for which was buried just a few yards from Safari's house. When her team went to exhume that body, it had been buried so close to Safari's house that even the hoes and other tools used to exhume it were borrowed from Safari's house. Safari vehemently denied any knowledge about that.

Maria's testimony was collaborated by another witness, called Murindakaka who was 46 years old, a prisoner and about to end his prison term because he had told the truth and it turn had been granted a reduced sentence. He had spent the last 15 years in jail for participating in the genocide. He had accepted to killing two old women and two children and pointed where that happened. His still had a year to complete his prison term and resume community service because of those deaths. When he was asked about the death of Eldfonce Mutabazi and whether on or not he

saw Safari he said; “We were drunk and quite excited because we could hear from the radio that it was patriotic to kill Tutsis. We could ask for money before we killed them but sometimes people would give us money to go and kill. We moved from place to place especially where we could hear people shouting. When we came to the road, I saw Mutabazi but he was surrounded by others and was bleeding at the heels. He was saying “If it were not for Safari you wouldn’t be treating me like this. He said he gave Safari 100.000 Francs (\$ 200.00) to protect him. You are killing me but who will look after my cows?”²⁶⁶ When asked whether he saw Safari in that group he said that he only heard the deceased mention the name of Safari. He said he did not stay to see how it ended but went on with others but thinks he was killed.

Another prisoner, Tubonye Mugyenzi testified that he accepted the death of Mutabarura, father of Diana Mukaaka. He said he killed Mutabarura because he was given 20.000 Francs (\$ 40.00) “because I had just come out of prison and I needed money. I am telling you this because the government said that if we tell the truth we would be forgiven. Another witness known as Luzinde also accepted for his role in the genocide. He said that he saw Safari with the other killers “and when I was arrested Safari knew that I would mention his name and brought be 100.000 Francs (\$ 200.00) to keep quiet”²⁶⁷. He said that Safari also sold him new Iron sheets.

Another witness Ndarushe, a Tutsi, said that Safari protected them at his house but they could see him go and come back at different times. He could go and be with those killing Tutsis while other Tutsis were hiding in his house. He said that some of the Tusti who had money could give it to Safari in order to protect them.

²⁶⁶. Gacaca Court, July 5, 2010.

²⁶⁷. Gacaca Court, July 5, 2010.

However, when he was pressurized by other militia to kill someone hiding at his house, Safari yielded and that is how Eldfonce was killed.

Safari had mainly the support of his (Tutsi) wife. She stunned the gathering when she said, "You said that Safari knew this man. If he did, it was before he got married to me but ever since we got married, my husband never saw that man again."²⁶⁸

There were 9 judges including one woman of the 19 required for the gacaca. All of them sat on benches arranged in a semi-circle, facing where the assembly was gathered. The judges had allowed my interpreter, Evaristo to sit with me near them on a bench since we would be taking notes from where we could hear everything. They had spent a considerable time running through the files and the hearing could not start until 10:39 am. There were about 200 people when the assembly started but by 5:00 pm, there were as many as 600 people. The hearing ended around 6:00 pm, the prisoners including Safari were taken back to prison. All the other procedures had followed both as previously told to me and as indicated above. I must remark that I have never seen an African audience in the open sun so more orderly and attentive. The judges did not take a break and I was informed that was routine. They are also not paid except a little assistance for their children's education since they sacrifice a lot of time. All the attentiveness, the patience, the diligence, the questions and the answers these questions were seeking indicated to me that the people are resolved to move toward finding a solution for genocide.

²⁶⁸. Gacaca Court, July 5, 2010.

Chapter Five

The Interpretation and Application of 2 Kgs 14: 5-6 in the Rwandan Context

This chapter forms the link between the base text, that is, 2 Kgs 14:5-6 and the history of Rwanda. It aims at applying the Amaziah paradigm into the context of Rwanda with an assumption that if Amaziah invoked the covenant to avert revenge and violence in Israel and if by extension the church belongs to the covenant of Israel, is it not possible that the same text can avert revenge and genocide in Rwanda? First though, I first make a summery of the problem in order to help the reader follow the discussion well.

In chapter 3, we saw that the church set in motion policies that encouraged revenge and reinforced the divisions of society. In the colonial times the missionaries committed themselves to the Christianization of the society, formed a strong alliance with the colonial authorities in claiming the Hamite theory of supremacy and invested the churches with a civilizing role. After the Germans lost the territory in 1919 and Belgium acquired it under the Versailles Treaty, the colonial administrators departed but the missionaries remained in Rwanda. In order to understand the territory, the Belgian administrators consulted and depended on the knowledge and expertise of the missionaries since they were well versed with the territory. The Belgians thought that there was no need to change the racial policies made in the previous German administration and chose to fervently

implement them²⁶⁹. They even made identity cards to be given at birth identifying a person as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa. These became the most dangerous tool in the execution of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi since genocide perpetrators could easily identify who was a Tutsi.

In the early days though, the Tutsi who were politically astute by training and not by birth took advantage of the European prejudice and exploited it to their own benefit. The outstanding catch phrase found in colonial literature is that 'Tutsi are alien conquerors of a Hamitic origin, possessing elegant physical features, very intelligent, always with a passion to rule, and believed to have caused civilization wherever they have existed.'²⁷⁰ They [Tutsi] used European backing to extend and intensify their control over the Hutu in areas of education, the quality of education, recruitment in the army, government administration in institutions such as banks, hospitals, the judiciary, tax exemptions and so on. It turned out to be viewed that to be a Tutsi was to be born privileged while to be a Hutu was to be a loser. Missionary schools which ideally were for the purpose of 'civilization' turned out to be *wombs* of racial ideology. In a gradual process, Tutsi elitism became racism, an enterprise that was highly supported by the missionaries.

²⁶⁹. Germany was a great power, with a number of more important colonies. As to how it looked at tiny Rwanda, then part of *Deutsch Ostafrika*, the meager place it occupies in standard histories of German colonization is evidence enough, e.g. Horst Gründer, *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*, Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1985. But Rwanda and Belgium were the same size, and the Belgians [expected to gain a lot from this territory]. Cited in Gerald Prunier, "The Rwanda Crisis History of the Genocide. (New York: Columbia University, 1995), 35.

²⁷⁰. See Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises (1900-1994)*, 34-48.

After World War II, missionaries that came to Rwanda particularly those from Switzerland had a different perspective on racism perhaps due to their experience of the impact of Nazi racial ideology in Europe. They did not subscribe to the notions of the Hamite supremacy in Rwanda and were more inclined to social justice. They acknowledged and regretted that racism was the framework from which all government and church policies were designed but there was not a confession of guilt or a repentance leaving everything in a grey area. Instead they opened job opportunities for the very few Hutu who had managed to go through the cracks of the education system. Some were appointed teachers or secretaries in the mission centers while a few clergy were promoted. In addition, the gains from the cash economy also started to emancipate Hutu agriculturalists by sending their children to schools, which were by now, open to them hence increasing numbers in a Hutu counterelite. The Tutsi ruling class, deeply entrenched in their feeling of 'Hamite supremacy' strongly objected to these developments. Their objections went as far as publishing two hateful documents in which they used a Rwandan myth of 'Ibimanuka' or those who descended from the sky to justify race supremacy as a right given to the 'Hamites'. They totally objected to any possibility of sharing power with the Hutu, and this uncompromising position put them at odds with the Europeans. The Europeans started to see the Tutsi elites as arrogant and power hungry while the Tutsi started to say that Rwanda's problem was not between Tutsi and Hutu but rather between Blacks (them) and 'Banzungu' (Whites). The Tutsi started to view the new brand of missionaries who were not as racist as those of the

pre-World War II era that they could *wean* them from power and privileges, a scenario that they resented with utmost hatred.

In the meantime, those Hutu clergy who were promoted to higher church positions seized the moment to carry out propaganda against discrimination experienced at the hands of colonizers. Whereas it had been for expediency of Belgian colonizers to herald the Tutsi as 'foreign conquerors of Hamitic origin' it turned out to be very contradictory because it branded them as none indigenous to Rwanda. Hutu elites therefore made the term *alien* a centerpiece of their anti-Tutsi propaganda. Very soon hundreds of thousands of illiterate Hutu masses that were flocking in the churches bought into this anti- Tutsi propaganda.

Church leadership under Msgr. Deprimoz in the late 1940s and Msgr. Perraudin in the mid 1950s up to independence on July 1, 1962 openly gave moral, financial and institutional support to the Hutu cause. So the Church became a double dealer in these disturbing affairs. First, it started off with a Hamite theory from which every colonial policy was framed and implemented with racial supremacy. This caused a lot of tension and community breakdown as a result of rivalry, and hatred. Second, after missionaries who did not subscribe to the notions of racial supremacy arrived on the scene, the church provided a consciousness and an institutional context for the emancipation of the Hutu, another brutally oppressive group that eventually became genocidal in 1994. So the church added 'insult to the injury' in a reverse manner. They acknowledged that privileges had been distributed or denied based on race but neither explained away the ideology of racial supremacy nor gave a confession of guilt. They let the situation remain in a

grey area and in the name of social justice abandoned their Tutsi protégés to concentrate on a Hutu cause.

The Hutu propagandists exploited the lack of a confession of guilt by keeping the Hamitic myth alive and well in order to use it to rally support from tens of thousands of illiterate Hutu masses that were flocking in churches on every Sunday. Stressing emphasis on the description of *alien invaders*, a gradual anti-Tutsi sentiment grew and united the Hutu population. This is the basis on which Catharine Newbury formulated her brilliant thesis known as, *The Cohesion of Oppression*, and illustrated on how the Hamite myth would be used against the Tutsi by those once looked down.²⁷¹ But why did the new missionaries keep quiet about racism if they recognized it was wrong? Perhaps, since dealing with the concept of repentance requires the courage to humbly face up humiliation, often an uncomfortable process that implies a radical change of behavior and may be loss of power, prestige and privileges in the necessary process of restitution, the church felt comfortable to keep silent on this matters. This silence, however, renders the interpretation that the former defenders of the Hamite theory, the colonial officials and the Catholic Church converted themselves to the Hutu cause, which they gave powerful support. And in any case, “if the Church heralded the Tutsi as “supreme humans” in 1902, the same Church would turn into a prime site for the slaughter of Tutsi in 1994,”²⁷² after it supported the Hutu.

²⁷¹. Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression, Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda 1860-1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

²⁷². Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 88.

In the period of decolonization, especially after Kenya and Tanzania had just got independence, the Tutsi, the 'natural born rulers' anticipated to inherit the transfer of authority of independent Rwanda. Being better educated than the Hutu and exercising a quasi-monopoly over the native clerical positions in the colonial administration, the Tutsi had been the first to pick up on the new ideas of colonial political devolution and possible self-government. "They fully realized that their social position was not impregnable and that they could not wait too long for the Belgians to transfer power to them if they did not want to see the transfer challenged."²⁷³ The missionaries then started to experience a Tutsi challenge and they realized that this challenge was not isolated but that, on the contrary, it was part of a wider movement of contestation of the colonial order coming from the very Tutsi elite whom the Belgians had been nurturing for the previous forty years. Unfortunately for the Tutsi this challenge happened when the European component of the church and its social objectives were quiet sympathetic to the marginalized Hutus. Apparently, when the Tutsi elite claimed immediate independence, the Hutu leaders asked the Belgian colonial power to free them first from Tutsi 'colonization', while at the same time multiplying their pledges of allegiance to the church which, took sides with them. The colonial administration did the same, and there took a spectacular reversal of the old alliances with the traditional Tutsi aristocracy.

The combination of changes in white clerical sympathies, a struggle for the control of the Rwandese church and a challenge of the colonial order by the Tutsi elite, all combined to bring a slow but momentous shift in the church's attitude from

²⁷³ . Gerald Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis History of a Genocide*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 43.

supporting the Tutsi elite to helping in the Hutu rise from their subservient position toward a new aspiring middle-class situation. With independence at the corner, political parties were formed but on purely ethnic divisions with the church throwing their weight behind the Hutu party in support of their cause. Realizing that they have lost church support, the party of the Tutsi, which was strongly conservative, monarchist and demanding immediate independence took a counterproductive step by receiving funding and diplomatic support from Communist China, a member of the UN Trusteeship Council, which was foreseeing Rwandan matters ever since Belgium acquired Rwandan territory from Germany under the Versailles Treaty. The result was immediately to deepen the antagonism between the Tutsi and the Belgian authorities. As the last Belgian deputy governor general was to write in his memoirs thus: "From the on, the unspoken agreement which the administration [Belgium] had made in the 1920s with the Tutsi ruling caste in order to further economic development... was allowed to collapse, also tacitly. The Tutsi wanted independence and were trying to get it quickly as possible by sabotaging Belgian actions, whether technical or political... The administration was forced to toughen its attitude when faced with such obstruction and hostility coming from chiefs and sub-chiefs [all Tutsi] with whom we had collaborated for so many years."²⁷⁴ Only one wonders whether according to Europeans, racial supremacy was a perfect idea as long as there were no obstruction and hostility from Tutsi protégés.

²⁷⁴ . Harroy, J.P, *Rwanda, du féodalisme à la démocratie 1955-1962*. (Brussels: Hayez, 1984). Cited in Gerald Prunier, "The Rwandan Crisis History of a Genocide", 12

By late 1959 rivalry and competition between Tutsi and Hutu political parties developed into intolerance and threats that culminated into violence. Prunier reports that the spark that ignited the powder keg was a very small one. "As he was walking home after attending a Sunday service in Byimana near Kabgagi on November 1, 1959, one of the Hutu sub-chiefs Dominique Mbonyumutwa, a was attacked and apparently harassed by young members of the Tutsi members and severely beaten. The (false) news of his death spread like a wild fire and Hutu activists began gathering their troops to mainly attack Tutsi chiefs. Confused fighting followed, mostly using traditional weapons such as spears, clubs and machetes. Many Tutsi homes were burned... On November 6, the Tutsi king with all his supporters started to retaliate, organizing commandoes to attack the Hutu...From the beginning the Belgian authorities showed extreme partiality for the Hutu, even letting them burn Tutsi houses without intervening...Around 300 people mainly Tutsi were dead."²⁷⁵

Fearing that more reprisals from Tutsi soldiers were going to result into more bloodshed, Msgr. Perraudin collaborated with Harroy, the Belgian resident governor in Bujumbura to bring Belgian troops from Congo Kinshasa under the command Colonel Gray Logiest in order to query the unrest. Colonel Logiest disliked the Tusti and considered them to be out of order. He immediately declared a state of emergency, made a list of Tutsi chiefs he declared undesirable, dismissed, arrested them and replaced them with Hutu appointments. We can recall that a similar

²⁷⁵ . Pierre Tabara, *Afrique, La face cachée*. (Paris: La Pensée Universelle, 1992), 179-85. Cited in Gerald Prunier, "The Rwanda Crisis History of Genocide", 27.

incident had taken place in the early years of the colony when Msgr. Leon Classe recommended for the overthrow of Hutu chiefs in their predominant Hutu areas of the north and northwestern parts of the territory and then *parachuted* in Tutsi chiefs as agents of 'civilization,' (see chapter 3 above). The only difference was that no deaths occurred then. Colonel Logiest went further than appointing Hutu chiefs and sub-chiefs by recruiting a predominant Hutu armed force to augment Hutu administration. Shortly after this turmoil in 1960, the Belgian authorities organized communal elections and it was clear that the Tutsi having been deprived of chiefs with their direct impact to the people as well as the basic organizational support of the church, the Hutu routed them with a score of 75 percent. Very many Tutsi elites and their families that survived Hutu clashes and Logiest's arrests run into exile from late 1959 to the middle of 1960.

With Hutu chiefs in charge of most local authorities, the newly elected advocates for Hutu emancipation at the center were finally in position to reorganize the central state. In 1961, with European clergy functioning more or less as a back up force for the Hutu leaders, providing it with everything from ghostwriters of manifestos and UN petitions for external contacts, the colonial government literally surrendered power to the Hutu activists. The support rendered by the European clergy under the leadership of Msgr. Perraudin and the colonial government under Colonel Gray Logiest, were real and, at times, even critical. Rwanda abolished the Tutsi monarchy became declared a republic announcing Grégoire Kayibanda as its prime minister, becoming president in 1962 after general election favored the Hutu majority. So it was more of a coup d'état by which the Belgian military overthrew

their former Tutsi collaborators in favor of the Hutu. In retrospect, this move might have been expedient and rightly so for the church and colonialists but quite an insidious one awaiting the most unfortunate events to befall the country. It turned out that yesterday's oppressed (Hutu) became the most brutal oppressors of today. They transformed their victorious counter-violence into the instigation of more violence.

In the first eighteen months of the republic under the presidency Gregoire Kayibanda, from May 1962 to November 1963 when an armed Tutsi insurrection attempted to regain power by force of arms, 20,000 Tutsi were rounded up and massacred, leaving hundreds of thousand to run into exile. However, the Tutsi never gave up their ambitions to capture power and when they launched an armed invasion from Uganda on October 1, 1990, this initiation of violence reached the intolerable level of genocide: torture, rape, slitting pregnant women open, hacking humans to pieces, burying humans alive, hunting humans with dogs as if animals, killing in churches [previously recognized as places of refuge], massacring old people and sick children in hospital, throwing babies against rocks, forcing people to kill their own relatives, burning while alive, denying burial and thousands of other ways of cynically degrading and mockingly putting to death.

In all these circumstances, the church either supported violence or became intentionally inactive not even making a theological statement denouncing blood shed. The church (post-independent Rwanda) never got concerned itself about the plight of Tutsi refugees of the 1959-1964 crises because it was Hutu dominated and considered refugees as rivals perhaps who deserved those circumstances. During

the 1994 genocide there were instances in which clergy became actively involved in the killings, (see chapter 3). But if the Church through her union in Christ is an extension of Israel, and as Paul writes, no longer alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers of the covenants of promise (τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας),²⁷⁶ and Christ the mediator of this new covenant (διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης ἐστίν),²⁷⁷ is the head of the Church (κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ)²⁷⁸, and fulfillment (τέλος), (*lit. End*) of the law,²⁷⁹ that Israel received through Moses on Mount Sinai, how is it possible to belong to a covenant which clearly abhors and prohibit violence and revenge, yet, the church of Rwanda perpetuated and participated in these crimes? The next subject is about how 2 Kgs 14:5-6 addresses the Rwandan situation.

In chapter three, I indicated how the colonial era from 1902-1963 was characterized by a strong alliance between missionaries with the colonial authorities in destroying the factors of ethnic integration by propagating racial supremacy in the process of formulating and implementing government policies. After independence in 1963, with the Head of State influencing who should lead the church, the government paying the salaries of church leaders, providing vehicles and paying for drivers, ordained clergy/chaplains infused in the military and remunerated by the government, what was formerly an alliance in the colonial era developed into an allegiance. By the 1980s all clergy had enrolled membership into the single ruling party (MRND) with the Roman Catholic archbishop appointed as

²⁷⁶ . Ephesians, 2:12.

²⁷⁷ . Hebrews, 9:15

²⁷⁸ . Ephesians, 1:22.

²⁷⁹ . Romans, 10:5.

chairman for the ruling party's powerful *Commission for Social Affairs*. There is no doubt then that this alliance/allegiance made the church to compromise its vision and the profound prophetic role. Bishop John Rucyahana was right when he told me in an interview that the church became *pocketed and zipped*²⁸⁰. From the perspective of Sinai covenant the church ought not have a divided allegiance. It was W.L. Moran²⁸¹ who demonstrated that 'the concept of the love of God' stressed by the Deuteronomist is actually borrowed from the political life of the ancient Near East. Political loyalty was generally expressed by the term 'love'. Thus, the king, demanding loyalty of his subjects, enjoins: 'Love me as you love yourselves. Political loyalty tolerates no compromise. Hence the suzerain demands the vassal's love of heart and soul or wholehearted love. Loving the king with one's entire heart signified the severance of all contact with other political powers; we find in the state treaties that the suzerain frequently warns the vassal not to transfer his allegiance to other kings nor to serve their wishes (see chapter one).

It was this expression, then, which served a political need in the ancient Near East that was formulated in the covenant and came to serve a religious need in Israel. The religion of Israel was the only religion that demanded exclusive loyalty with God expressing that he was a jealous God who tolerated no rivals.²⁸² God uses the expression *אֱלֹהִים קַדְוֶה* (jealous God) to preclude the possibility of multiple loyalties, such as were permitted in other religions where the believer was bound in diverse

²⁸⁰ . Rucyahana, June 28, 2010.

²⁸¹ . W. L. Moran, *The Ancient Near Eastern Background of Love of God in Deuteronomy*: Catholic Biblical Quarterly Vol., 25, (1963), 77ff. Cited in Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School": (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 81.

²⁸² . See Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Josh 24:19, Nahum 1:2.

relationships to many gods. "So the stipulation in political treaties demanding exclusive loyalty to one king corresponds strikingly to the religious belief in one, single, exclusive Deity."²⁸³ We also find a similar root קנא in Numb 5:14 used in a sense of a husband who is jealous of his wife. On this basis and other marital formulae describing Israel's relationship to God for instance לַכֶּם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי לְעָם (Lev 26:12), we get a sense that loyalty to God has an emotional aspect of love attached to it. If this is true as we read in Deut 6:5 that בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ וּבְכָל-חֵזֶקְךָ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, I find that both the aspect of the emotion to love God and that of exclusive loyalty were missing in the Rwandan Church during the colonial period and from the period after independence. A Church that perpetuated a racial supremacy and set in motion a practice that encouraged revenge and reinforced the divisions of society plus some of its cruel methods in reference to terms such as 'brigand' and 'beating' (see chapter 3), was a church not only lacking an emotion for its people but also for God. In addition, the behavior of all clergy to be affiliated with a single ruling political party by taking on its membership and getting remunerated by that party, the archbishop to be seen walking with the Head of a genocidal government and refusing to denounce these actions all meant that his loyalty and that of the rest of clergy were not loyalty for God but rather for the government that provided them with material benefit. The clergy could not criticize the actions of the government just as the saying goes that 'how can you cut off the hand that feeds you?'

²⁸³ . Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 82. Also see Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969), 151-154.

In the base text for this study, that is 2 Kgs 14:5-6, v.6 informs us that king Amaziah averted revenge because he was guided by the Lord's command. We should not, be surprised, after all, that Amaziah is familiar with the law because as an Israelite king he had to write a copy of God's law for himself on a scroll, as a sign of submission to the Lord as his King, and as a guide for his rule in obedience to his heavenly Suzerain according to Deut 17: 18. Alternatively, if we can believe the Chronicler in 2 Chr 25 who records that the first years of king Amaziah were good ones, we can assume that his royal lineage exposed him at an early age to the tutorage of Jehoiada a renown priest or his son Zechariah. As custodians of Israelite religion, priests conceived the covenant as an expression of the will of God and his absolute command. But whether Amaziah's knowledge of covenant law was the result of priestly tutorage or the result of his own dedication to its study, God's character inherent in the law became transposed unto him, not that he became like God but rather that he perceived the absolute commitment that God required of him. This point was well argued by James Barr that "the commandments point forward to a creative new foundation of moral thinking and action laid by transposing men into a new total relationship with God in which the work of grace present in the establishment of the covenant comes to be fulfilled."²⁸⁴ The commitment is then exhibited in what the Hebrew Bible describes as 'walking in the ways of the Lord', Cf. Deut 5:32-33:

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲחֻכֶּם לֹא תִסְרֹוּ יָמִין וּשְׂמָאל

²⁸⁴ . James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology, An Old Testament Perspective*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 268.

בְּכָל־הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אַתֶּם תֵּלְכוּ לִמְעַן תַּחְיִיוּ וְטוֹב לָכֶם וְהֵאָרְכְּתֶם יָמִים בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּירְשׁוּ:

Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess. (KJVS Translation). It appears then that ‘walking in the ways of the lord without turning right or left’ is a character formed from exposure and acceptance of the commandments.

In addition to the formation of character there is the ability to recognize the authority of the written word. By using the phrase: “But he did not put to death the sons of the assassins, in accordance with what is written in the Teaching of Moses which YHWH commanded”, the Deuteronomic historian was recognizing other possibilities or if you will ‘other competing options’ available for the king such as was the custom of transgenerational revenge. Moreover, the other expression in 2Kgs 14:5 , וַיְהִי כַאֲשֶׁר חֻזְקָה הַמַּמְלָכָה בְּיָדוֹ , translated as, ‘Once he had the kingdom firmly in his grasp’, and if we recall that during that lex talionis became a one man’s decision during the monarchy, v.5 then might suggest that the Amaziah had a prerogative to do what he chose since he had the power under his control. However, he chose to spare the sons of the assassins based on what YHWH had commanded. So we see Amaziah’s character combining with the ability to recognize the authority of the written word and letting the human impulse of revenge to be superseded by the will of YHWH. It became more about YHWH and less about Amaziah, an aspect that is

duly stressed by the Deuteronomistic historian²⁸⁵. The king's ethics of averting revenge came to be governed by the law and commandments of YHWH, making a departure from customary practice. In fact his act was in line with Deuteronomic law (Deut 24:16) quoted in the verse. He was first transformed by the law and then used the same law to transform the cultural institution of revenge in Israel and I would like to show how this is important for the Rwandan situation.

We have seen in chapter 3 that missionaries whose objective was to Christianize Rwanda proclaimed the Hamite theory of supremacy and invested the churches with a civilizing role. But we also saw that some of their Christianizing methods were a combination of charm and cruelty for instance in the Father Huntzinger case that were politically motivated and aimed at quantity but not quality. The church had a lot of compromising alliances that 'blinded' the delivery of the Gospel in love and truth. Although they could sooner or later boast of what they referred to as a 'Tornado', in my opinion for a church to support and perpetuate racial supremacy with no shred of evidence, Biblical or otherwise, combined with dubious numbers was a clear way of building a structural mechanism of violence. Violence would then be the character of the Church.

In fact, I have no doubt in my mind that even if Rwanda was 90 percent Christian on the eve of the 1994 genocide, these numbers did not represent a fully grown or mature Christian character in semblance to that of king Amaziah. The king had the complete exposure to the Law of Moses and with his acceptance and dedication to it, the inherent will of God became transposed unto his own character,

²⁸⁵ . See Mordechai Cogan & Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings*. 11 vols., 155.

thus, a transformation. This fact is resonated in the New Testament teaching that love for God cannot be separate from obedience, Εὰν ἀγαπᾷτέ με, τὰς ἐντολὰς τὰς ἐμὰς τηρήσετε (Jn 14:15). V.16-17 adds, “ And I will ask my Father, and he will give you another Counselor... the Spirit of truth. So it is a combination of obedience to the commandments with the indwelling spirit of truth that helps a church to participate in the character of God²⁸⁶. Since the Christian Bible as an Old and New Testament lays claim upon the whole scripture as authoritative witness to God’s purpose in Jesus Christ for the church and the world²⁸⁷, I find Amaziah’s paradigm relevant to the Rwandan situation. We can deduce from this that the Rwandan church became divisive and perpetuated violence because that is what it perceived and made its preoccupation from the start.

Like Amaziah, the church too needs to combine a strong or mature character with the ability to recognize the authority of the written word. If we recall that Rwanda has repeatedly gone through violence (1958, 1961-64, 1900-1994), it is then an imperative to have a community that will be mature enough to rise above revenge and violence. But I recognize that Amaziah had a traditional background in which Israelite religion conceived of all law as an expression of the will of God, his absolute command. This is not the case in Rwanda and generally in most parts of Africa. So the tradition has to be built and J.K. Bruckner is right when he says that a particular law is authoritative as a practical law when the community teaches it as a

²⁸⁶ . Cf. 2 Peter 1:4.

²⁸⁷ . See Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.

necessary practice.²⁸⁸ In the context of Rwanda, 2 Kgs 14: 5-6 can be taught as part of a biblical narrative that will be accepted by the community of faith, the church, as binding on its conscience. I would like to assume that lack of a biblically informed society and perpetual failure to articulate a clear message against violence will still leave the society vulnerable. Moreover, teaching or giving instruction about the decrees of YHWH is a major component of the Hebrew Bible tradition²⁸⁹. In fact “had the institutions of Rwanda (churches, schools) been used to educate a generation capable of promoting human rights, peace and justice, there would have been no genocide in Rwanda”²⁹⁰

Part of building character is making up for the past in the form of repentance and Rwanda has a lot on the table in this category. We saw in chapter 3 that there was lack of a confession of guilt by the missionaries who regretted the use of racial supremacy, an aspect that would have introduced a fresh start in the course of no revenge. So while it is true that Rwanda has no religious tradition similar to that of ancient Israel, we cannot ignore the need to rebuild the existing church by assisting it to start at the point of failure, which is confession of the past. It is in this regard that this study has incorporated the prophetic messages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel because of the following reasons: First, the Sinai covenant which king Amaziah invoked to avert revenge belongs to the schemata of Priestly covenants, and, “YHWH’s covenants were given in the Priestly view, to provide the means of

²⁸⁸ . Bruckner, J. K, “Ethics”, Page 233 of *Dictionary of the Old Testament, Pentateuch*. Edited by Desmond, T. Alexander & David, W. Baker. (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2003).

²⁸⁹ . See Deut 4:9; וְהוֹדִיעֵתֶם לְבָנֵיךָ וּלְבָנֵי בְנֵיךָ, Cf. Deut 11:19; Exod 18:20; Lev 10:11.

²⁹⁰ . Gatwa, *The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994*, 132.

atonement and reconciliation of the sinful people with their god and to sanctify Israel through his law so that he could place his Tabernacle in their midst and bless them in their new land.”²⁹¹ Second, Ezekiel belongs to the Priestly work and has his central goal the reconstruction of the covenant of Sinai and its associated institutions. Jeremiah is a little nuanced in the use of terms such as a new covenant to be written on Israel’s heart but even then he uses this style as a device to make possible YHWH to return to the remnant after repenting of their sin. I find these concepts necessary in rebuilding a ‘fallen church’ and in reinforcing Amaziah’s paradigm of transformation.

I would like to recognize the significance of Gacaca as a cultural ethos in the transformation of revenge. It is an important pillar on which peace and reconciliation stand. However, since every person who is a member of the church also belongs to the Gacaca it then can provide a platform on which the church can build its message and not the converse. Gacaca, with its *modus operandi* that make it difficult for perpetrators of crimes to hide is able to make people confess their crimes but I think it is the church that can make the absolution.

Last but not least, the implications of a transformed leader who is able to make risks and initiate change should not be ignored. Amaziah may not have been a great man in the sense of righteousness but for the simple fact the Deuteronomistic historian stresses the departure he made in the custom of revenge gives the readers an opportunity to think about their circumstances. Had there been one or two voices in Rwanda challenging racial supremacy or denouncing violence may be the

²⁹¹ . Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, Essays in the History of Israel*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 306-307.

genocide would not have happened or may be it would not have involved the massacre of one million people. Change is needed not only in areas of segregation but also in other areas of corruption, nepotism even failure to have a proper vision for the church.

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